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Mrs. Sarah Siddons

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James Boaden

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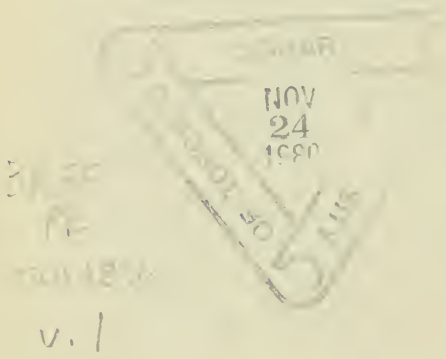

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INTRODUCTION

The elegant author of the memoir on Italian tragedy has mentioned, to the honour of the city of Verona, that it celebrated the various merits of Maffei during the lifetime of that great poet. On his return to his native city after a short absence, that nobleman found his bust placed over the principal entrance of the Philharmonic Academy, with the following inscription on the pedestal:

"Marchioni Scipioni Maffei Viventi,
Academia Philharmonica
Decreto et Ære Publico
Anno MDCCXXVII."

Although nothing could surpass the amiable virtues of his private character, this tribute of a poetical society was doubtless paid to him who sustained the tragic fame of his country.

It is on the same ground that I pay the present tribute to Mrs. Siddons.

But there was an additional motive that weighed with me in the latter case, — that the actor can expect but little from the honours of time. The dying author leaves behind him, perhaps, immortal

writings to bear his name, and secure to it a just veneration and gratitude. Not so the living organ of his success upon the theatre. Flaminia, who acted the Merope of Maffei, is known to the world by the slight record of Rousseau; who mentions her talents in general terms, but supplies no minute description of their effect.

On this subject my predecessor in stage history, Cibber, has the following brief but beautiful expressions of regret:

"Pity it is that the momentary beauties flowing from an harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record! that the animated graces of the player can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that presents them; or, at best, can but imperfectly glimmer through the memory or imperfect attestation of a few surviving spectators."

It would be an injury alike to the author of "The Careless Husband" and the author of "The School for Scandal" to withhold from the reader's comparison the above reflections, expanded in the exquisite verses of Sheridan:

"The actor only shrinks from Time's award;
Feeble tradition is his memory's guard;
By whose faint breath his merits must abide,
Unvouch'd by proof, to substance unallied!
The grace of action, — the adapted mien,
Faithful as nature to the varied scene;
Th' expressive glance, whose subtle comment draws

Entranc'd attention, and a mute applause;
Gesture that marks, with force and feeling fraught,
A sense in silence, and a will in thought;
Harmonious speech, whose pure and liquid tone
Gives verse a music scarce confess'd its own;
Passion's wild break — and frown that awes the sense,
And every charm of gentler eloquence, —
All perishable! like the electric fire,
But strike the frame, and as they strike expire."

But, however failing the memory of such graces, and however imperfect the attestation of the surviving spectator, this should be remembered — "spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues" — effects, recent from their causes, submit those causes to analysis, to examination, to description. Some art is, moreover, acquired in the practice of painting our impressions; and we shall always communicate by our touch some of the electric fire which we have received. It is, therefore, gratitude to the actor and duty to the public to perpetuate the character of excellence, and afford models for imitation to future artists.

This is not, however, a task for every hand, nor for all periods of our existence. We must finish the sketches of our refined pleasures while their impressions are yet vivid, before we are past our full power, whatever measure may have been allotted to us.

Doctor Johnson has said that "a whole life cannot be spent upon syntax and etymology." Yet

the interest of language must be confessed to be lasting. But what apology would suffice for him who should confine himself even to rational amusements in a life full of difficulties and of duties?

But though, in the language of Shakespeare's Ferdinand, I may say:

> "The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead,
> And makes my labours pleasures;"

though such an occupation as mine constitute the highest charm of retirement, "to live over again the most agreeable portion of life," yet I must not conceal from the reader, what I cannot but feel myself, the powerful admonitions of time, —

> "Cynthius aurem
> Vellit et admonuit," —

that my records, of whatever value, could not be longer delayed; that the evening of my day was fully come, "and the night was at hand, when no man can work."

I therefore resolved to commit to the press, without further delay, all that forty years of observation had collected relative to the stage; and to give to my work the chronological form of memoirs. Part of my plan I have executed in the life of my late friend, Mr. Kemble, which has been received by every description of readers with a degree of favour of which I may reasonably be proud; they have placed it, where it was my

ambition it should be, next to the delightful "Apology" of Colley Cibber; the distance, however, the vanity of an author may somewhat abridge. What remains seemed to reduce itself naturally to the period which has been adorned by the amazing talent of his sister, Mrs. Siddons; accordingly it is under the title of memoirs of that lady's professional life that I deliver this, my conclusive work upon the stage. I had, I confess, the ambition to show that I could finish a suitable companion to the portrait which I had exhibited of Mr. Kemble; and as in the brother I found the greatest actor of his time, so in the sister I possessed, in all probability, the greatest actress of any times. Nor did I shun the question as to the propriety of estimating her pretensions while living. Mrs. Siddons has, however honoured, long existed as a private member of the community —and it is the life which she has already closed which alone it would become me to write. I have no motive whatever to draw me aside from a level consideration of her merits. I estimate them, seeking no favour, and certainly fearing no displeasure. The task, if at all to be performed by me, must be executed now.

Nor can I properly, on such a theme, defer to "younger strengths." They who have only witnessed the force retained in her decline have no conception of the tenderness which was once equally transcendent. So almost exclusively was

her latter period devoted to characters of strength and majesty, that it became, among recent spectators, a question whether the pathetic was ever equally in her range, — a notion that could never have been entertained but that Lady Macbeth, and Queen Katharine, and Volumnia, and Elvira had effaced the recollections of the Isabella, the Shore, the Belvidera, the Euphrasia even of her middle life; but it was in her three first seasons, or from her twenty-seventh to her thirtieth year, that the utmost pathos prevailed; for this many reasons might be assigned, but they are too obvious not to strike every intelligent observer of human nature.

But supposing that, as my contemporary, I had a chance of surviving the admirable lady in question, what larger field would be opened by her death?[1] Her private life! What is there, then, in the private life of the most excellent wife, mother, sister, friend, the detail of which could be interesting to the public? The duties of such a character are unobtrusive, unostentatious, and avoid the pen of history. They confer the best of blessings; but they shun all record and reward, save the internal consciousness which renders every other, in this life, of little moment. I am not of a nature to pry into family papers for "secrets better hid." No reproach shall ever

[1] Mrs. Siddons died at her residence in Upper Baker Street on June 8, 1831. Her biographer's decease occurred in 1839.

assail me for having forgotten the delicacy with which a sex that it is our interest to hold sacred should for ever be treated.

By delaying this publication, therefore, I could derive no advantages, and must certainly lose some that I possess. I should, in a few years, look in vain around me for those who alone can be competent to judge of the resemblance of my portrait — those, too, who feel the strongest interest in the original. I now appeal to them to attest my veracity, and I hope their only surprise will be to find their own feelings so truly divined, and, perhaps, not imperfectly rendered.

Another object strongly urged me to immediate publication, — the present condition of the Drama itself. We surely cannot hide from ourselves that it has declined to a state disgraceful to the high character of the country. What so fitted to recall us to better things as the progress of a great genius in her art, the display of whose inimitable powers necessarily involved those of our great dramatic poets? But I have been careful never to mistake the priestess for the source of her inspiration. All the eloquence of her utterance, all the magic of her eye, have never made me for a moment indifferent to the fame of those who created the characters, endowed them with manners and sentiment, and which she graced, I admit, with congenial beauty and grandeur and energy and passion.

Nor should the reader complain that the common measure of quotation is somewhat extended in the present work. Whoever attempts to paint the momentary beauties of elocution and personal expression must ask aid from the exact language uttered; the reference from the actor to the poet is perpetual. Nor should Alcides be beaten by his page. In exemplifying the charms of the great actress I have selected much of the most perfect composition in our language. But I confess that I do so with a feeling kindred to that of Hamlet, when he displays to the alarmed queen, his mother, the portraits of her past and present husband, —

"This *was* your husband: look you now what follows."

The period between the first season of Mrs. Siddons at Drury Lane Theatre and her return, in 1782, I have reviewed with some care, because I would have it possess its portion of entertainment, and I know not where any tolerable record of it is to be found. The absence of Mrs. Siddons for six years from the capital may perhaps remind the reader of the retirement of Achilles from the field before Troy when insulted by Agamemnon. But the Father of Poetry was able to compensate the absence even of Achilles, and the very catalogue of the Grecian commanders and their ships is relieved or invigorated by so many sparkling touches of genius, that in no part

of the divine Iliad does he more decidedly demonstrate his immense superiority over his imitators.

> "Such bliss to one alone,
> Of all the sons of soul was known,
> And Heaven and Fancy, kindred powers,
> Have now o'erturn'd th' inspiring bowers,
> Or curtain'd close such scene from every future view."

My work is of a nature to rest entirely upon the accuracy and ability of its author. I could receive but little aid, if I had sought any: my love for the subject has never wearied in the task, and I presume to say that a more faithful record will not easily be found.

It may be necessary to add, in justice to the admirable actress herself, that she has never seen one line of these papers while the author was engaged upon them, and I can only hope that she will not be offended when they ultimately are offered to her notice. They who know Mrs. Siddons will acquit her of the indelicacy of suggesting her own praise, in the most remote, or indeed any, manner.

Although, perhaps, it may be always impossible to conciliate the differences of critical opinion, yet I have not been indifferent to any liberal remarks upon my former work. One benefit I perceive myself to have derived, — the present subject is better held together; it has more unity, though

I trust it is still sufficiently diversified to be entertaining.

Such as it is, it is submitted implicitly and cheerfully to the candour and justice of the public. I cannot be said to have hurried rashly before them; for, although many trifles escaped from the literary ardour of my youth, more than sixty years had passed over my head before I had courage to venture the *justum volumen*, and behold what Doctor Johnson called a bound book lettered with my name. J. B.

60 Warren Street, Fitzroy Square, 1st December, 1826.

MRS. SIDDONS

CHAPTER I.

BIOGRAPHY but seldom selects its ornaments from the gentler sex. Women are devoted as much by nature as custom to the domestic duties. Their merits are to be felt in their homes and in their offspring; if the former be well ordered, and the latter well bred, the charm of both may without hesitation be ascribed to the mistress and the mother.

The wide range of male ambition but rarely tempts the modest reserve of our females. The hereditary principle, so startling in theory, so salutary in its results, has sometimes placed our women upon the throne; and their wisdom or their virtue (gallantry, perhaps morals, would combine the terms) commonly rendered their reigns memorable, not only for the doubtful advantages of conquest, but the solid triumph in the happiness of their people.

The display of the beauty and the accomplish-

ments of the sex in a station so exalted has seldom, I think, been viewed with envy; yet in the walks of literature the female is distinguished with rather unwilling admiration. She who yields to a powerful impulse, and indulges either her fancy or her wit, with difficulty escapes from the reproach of pedantry; and is suspected to resign, for literary distinction, much of her proper charm, that graceful modesty, which retires from even praise itself too vehemently pronounced. She is, therefore, generally contented to abstain from many subjects perfectly suited to her power, and allows to the bolder sex the mental ascendency which might frequently admit of dispute, and not seldom admits indeed of no dispute.[1]

The progress of refinement has thrown the stage open to a competition of the two sexes, and often inscribed a female name in the highest rank of theatrical merit. The author of "The Sublime and Beautiful" has found no difficulty in commemorating Mrs. Siddons even with Garrick himself.

But this field of competition in mimetic ex-

[1] On this subject, Doctor Fiddes laments that there should be no foundations for the female sex, — "which," says he, "allowing to them the same advantage of education as men, would certainly be equal to them, if not in the strength of their minds, yet in the beauty and delicacy of their thoughts: and in several of the more liberal and polite parts of learning, would make a readier progress, and probably arrive at length to a greater perfection than is common to men." — *Life of Wolsey*, p. 114.

cellence was opened to the ladies by growing laxity of manners. The greatest period of the English drama witnessed no female performer on a public stage. We were indebted to the recall of the Stuarts for abolishing the absurdity of constituting boys the representatives of female character. But a great deal was to be done before the timid and puritanic manners of the previous age could endure, much less sustain, the public exposure of the sex. The example of the court at length relaxed the general manners of the people, and virtue became an unheeded sacrifice, after the exterior guards of decorum were removed. To sit through the indecencies of the modern comedy became a favourite pastime, and some were found capable of hearing them without a mask. The actresses of that day were usually the avowed mistresses of profligate courtiers, and supported unabashed, and with infinite gaiety, their full share in the impure colloquies of the drama. In truth there has at all times been rather a close alliance of this nature between the parties here alluded to. And if it were not a fact, it would be an elegant symbol, when it is said of Pompey's Theatre, "that the seats of the spectators were the steps to the temple of Venus." Thus the first exposure of the person was accompanied by the attendant corruption of the mind; and the lesson of loose feeling was delivered, by the applauded wanton

of the stage, to the ears of youthful inexperience, and awakened passion. At all events the mask would conceal alike the rising blushes, or the want of them.

The British Juvenal touched this "smiling mischief" with his venerable hand, and devoted it to scorn or to oblivion:

> "For Shame regain'd the post by sense betray'd,
> And Virtue call'd oblivion to her aid."

With the growing purity of the stage, a corresponding delicacy, or at least decency, was observable in its professors. A woman of virtue might there be found, however greatly admired; and a bold and caustic satirist [1] at least amended what his avowed object was to destroy. The ingenuous Dryden bowed at his reproof, and perhaps struggled after purer composition. The improvement of manners to which I have alluded was favourable to the female professors of the stage. They changed the sex of their patrons, and were frequently received in the best society. All the refinements of rank and education were open to their remark and to their imitation. They soon dropped the swelling pretensions of the princess for the gentle grace of modest, but reflecting, virtue. The authors followed in the train of society, which they ought always to have con-

[1] Collier.

ducted, and disdained any longer to pollute their scenes with the open avowal of female dishonour.

But, as comedy was thus interdicted the daring stratagems of vice, and many of the dilemmas to which they conducted, so it lost the gay flutter of wit, by which a set of specious but loose manners was rendered often triumphant and always dangerous. Yet interest in the drama was necessarily to be found, and instead of unmasking the base and punishing the profligate, the new school precipitated the innocent into unmerited distress, and, having through four acts wound calamity about the heroine as a garment, employed a scene or two of the fifth in natural or unnatural expedients of relief, and sometimes exceeded even the demands of tragedy in the tears excited by repentance or magnanimity.

There is hardly to be found in the history of human taste a change so rapid and entire as appeared in the thirty years which elapsed between the composition of "The Double Dealer" of Congreve and "The Conscious Lovers" of Steele. The Lady Touchwood of Congreve is a Messalina, whose avowed profligacy (for she talks of her own dishonour to Maskwell) is not even lowered to the use of comedy by becoming ridiculous. I say to the use of comedy, because perhaps at a certain age the tender passion entertained for improper objects, viewed as a folly rather than a crime, may become the lawful prey of the comic

muse. But unless thus covered with ridicule as unsuited to the parties, it should never be exhibited on the stage, merely because the poetic justice of the catastrophe punishes it as immoral. The indecency of such an interest should banish it from every well-regulated playhouse. The grosser vices of our natures may sometimes form subjects for the tragic muse; and they then need every artifice of the poet to keep them from exciting disgust instead of dread. It is for this reason that Phedra, as a subject, is banished from the English stage, though tolerated upon the French. I am happy, in estimating the comparative purity of the two nations, to give the palm of virtue to the audiences of my own country. In the case of Phedra, the French, in compliment to the Greek Euripides or their own,[1] while there can be found an actress to sustain the character, will continue to endure the display of an incestuous love. It should be remembered here, that they do so without the palliative of Greek fatalism. The displeasure of a deity toward a particular race devoted its members to a long succession of inevitable crimes. An Athenian audience, in full assent to this feeling, saw the guilt of Œdipus and Phedra and Orestes with a measure of pity, which in ourselves it cannot excite.

As we approach to the stage of our own times,

[1] Racine. Compare him particularly in the "Phèdre" and "Iphigénie."

it may readily be imagined that its purity would not at all suffer under the direction of Mr. Garrick. Himself the greatest of all actors, he would naturally turn in the first instance to the compositions best suited to his own powers. To be her universal representative was conferred upon him by nature; and he discovered in the page of Shakespeare the only inspiration adequate to his talents. If nature wrote through Shakespeare, the poet in his turn spoke best through Garrick. By this it is not meant that an occasional passage, sometimes perhaps an entire character, was not better given by another actor, — these are the dreams of the fanatic, who invests his idol with uniform transcendence, — but that he was, on the whole, more congenial with the soul of Shakespeare; penetrated like him the secret of the passions; unfolded like him the infinite diversities of character; and, if I may glance at Doctor Johnson's praise of Shakespeare himself, might have been our ambassador to a new-found continent, to exhibit there all the feelings and manners of our own.

It was often supposed that this great actor was cold as to contemporary writers. But their productions do not convict him of bad taste; on the contrary, they demonstrate his judgment to have been all but infallible. Fully possessed with the genuine fire of Shakespeare, he must have often read with regret, probably contempt, the bald versions from the French which were tendered to

him as almost original compositions. I take upon me to say that in no instance whatever, when transferring Voltaire to the English stage, has any Murphy or Hill, either for the purpose of concealment or improvement, dared to take the coxcomb departure from the original that distinguishes the counterfeits of Shakespeare upon the French stage. To these mere translators of the plays of other countries Mr. Garrick must have borne but little reverence, and he could have been expected but occasionally to attend to them at all. His rejection or indifference, his doubt or his delay, were at such times assailed by every description of influence. Some noble lord, an undoubted judge of the subject, some high-born dame, accustomed to the empire of fashion, was soon desirous of seeing Mr. Garrick upon the offered drama; and a real, often a simulated, deference was expressed by the manager to the patron about a matter which concerned his own interest, and could properly be submitted only to his own judgment. To yield to a rage for incessant novelty is to ensure the destruction of the Drama, by inviting everything that is unnatural in interest and loose and trashy in language.

Fortunately for Mr. Garrick, the revivals of our own stock of sterling plays, aided by his wonderful talent, kept up a steady attraction to his theatre, sufficient for his fame and his profit. He had engaged in no rash speculation, which was to

be sustained by unusual receipts (a fatal measure of present supply and future exhaustion); he therefore quietly proceeded in his certain course, and gradually became wealthy. To the moral purity of his stage this great man paid the proper attention. There was little obnoxious in our best dramatic works, which might not be omitted without loss to the scene, or softened without injury to the dialogue. If new and commanding genius arose among us, the manager was ready to foster and applaud it; if not, the fund of merits accumulated by past geniuses was, in a catholic sense, inexhaustible, and available as our own.

We are often compelled to admire the fortunate concurrence of events attending particular persons. It was a happiness for the subject of these memoirs to have been born in the exact position of life, and at the precise time she was. Somewhat earlier, her correct feeling might have kept her from the stage, though the true sphere of talents like hers; it indeed affords the only public display of female eloquence. She started as an actress when the profession did not disgrace a woman of virtue. Becoming early attached to a man of the most honourable and steady character, the incense offered to her beauty did not disturb her peace. The talents of this great woman are said to have been slowly developed, and the growing claims of her family seemed to be the only unresisted calls upon her genius. At length fully kindled, it burst

forth with a brilliancy that, in her own sex, had never been witnessed, and rivalled in its charm the spell of the great enchanter Garrick in all but his universality.

It is often incident to those who themselves illustrate a family to be desirous of deriving lustre from their ancestors. The unquestioned superiority of mental power covets a descent marked by rank and wealth and virtue, and indulges the love of self in the commemoration of others to whom it boasts even a remote, often a doubtful, alliance. Mr. Gibbon has occupied three and twenty pages in tracing his family in the weald of Kent, where they held land in the year 1326, and he is proud that it could supply a Marmorarius or an architect to our Edward the Third. The family of Kemble may, for aught I know, have similar honours to boast; but in the management of a company of travelling comedians, such vanity is little likely to court the attention, and Mr. Roger Kemble seemed perfectly free from vanity of every kind. He appears to have been greatly respected in the circuit which he visited, and his religion was of that mild and subdued character which excited no enmity, and perhaps was but imperfectly known.

A Catholic, if very earnest in his faith, must lament the profession of the stage as a sin with difficulty to be expiated. His wife was a Protes-

tant; and I have heard that the usual arrangement took place as to the children: the girls followed the opinions of their mother, and their father's hopes for his daughters might charitably enlarge the paradise of the holy see.

Mrs. Kemble was the daughter of Mr. John Ward, an actor of merit, and the manager of a company of comedians acting in Warwickshire and some of the adjacent counties. This gentleman, in the year 1746, seeing that the monument of Shakespeare, in the church of Stratford-upon-Avon, by the silent operation of 120 years, had suffered considerably, took upon himself to make love of pleasure do the work of gratitude. The effigy of their great poet might have mouldered from the church walls before a corporation of his countrymen either invented or supplied the means of its restoration. The player conceived the design of a benefit performance in the old town-hall, on Tuesday, the 9th day of September, 1746, and the black countenance of Othello restored the almost "natural ruby" to the poet's own. Mr. Ward gave the whole produce of the receipts on this occasion; and the original colours being still ascertainable in 1748, the monument was carefully repaired, and Mr. John Hall, an artist, probably a descendant of the family of Shakespeare's son-in-law, exhibited the bard in his habit, as he lived, with all the sparkling pleasantry which the original sculptor intended to perpetuate.

Mr. Ward spoke for the benefit, as we may call it, of Shakespeare some verses written by the Rev. Joseph Greene. The most learned education may fail to bestow more than the grammar of poetry; from Mr. Greene's forty-five lines, no couplet can be quoted but the first, and that only to show how well he remembered, and must have imagined others to forget, the opening of Pope's prologue to Cato.

Mr. Greene thus begins his address:

> "To rouse the languid breast by strokes of art,
> When listless indolence had numb'd the heart."

Mr. Pope's initial couplet runs thus:

> "To wake the soul by tender strokes of art,
> To raise the genius and to mend the heart."

"To make mankind in conscious virtue bold," becomes, in Mr. Greene's version, "In Virtue's cause her drooping sons t' ingage;" and "For this the tragic muse first trod the stage," more architecturally, he tells us —

> "For this first Attic theatres were raised."

Charity, on many occasions, "covers a multitude of sins," and on this shall be allowed to hide all.

Mrs. Siddons, I have always understood to be senior to her brother, Mr. Kemble, by two years. She was born at Brecknock in South Wales, in the year 1755, and was named after her mother,

Sarah. From her she derived that exact and deliberate articulation, the ground of all just speaking. In her youthful acquirements she had probably few aids beyond those of her parents, and could have none superior, as far as education conducted to professional excellence. In music she attained a degree of vocal perfection seldom heard among those comedians who travel; and as early as in her thirteenth year sustained the heroines of our English operas, and sang any incidental music that either the play itself or the copious attraction of the playbill in those days demanded.

It might be supposed that youthful families — in most conditions of life a helpless burthen — are more than usually irksome to the wandering professors of the stage; and indeed, in infancy, they must be so; but time abates much of this evil, and, by bringing the children within the range of employment, compensates in some degree the expense and the difficulty consequent upon their birth. We have all enjoyed a laugh at the cast of a play in the Daggerwood family; but the recurrence of the manager's name must be often found in the country playbills of former times. A man of good character, with an amiable wife, and many children, spoke strongly to the feelings of the gentry in our opulent districts. The mixed appeal of vanity and poverty has been seldom better displayed than in the following invitation to a performance of "Theodosius:"

"At the old theatre in East Grinstead, on Saturday, May, 1758, will be represented (by particular desire, and for the benefit of Mrs. P.) the deep and affecting tragedy of 'Theodosius, or the Force of Love,' with magnificent scenes, dresses, etc.

"Veranes by Mr. P., who will strive, as far as possible, to support the character of this fiery Persian Prince, in which he was so much admired and applauded at Hastings, Arundel, Petworth, Midworth, Lewes, etc.

"Theodosius by a young gentleman from the University of Oxford, who never appeared on any stage.[1]

"Athenais by Mrs. P. Though her present condition will not permit her to wait on gentlemen and ladies out of the town with tickets, she hopes, as on former occasions, for their liberality and support.

"Nothing in Italy can exceed the altar in the first scene of the play. Nevertheless, should any of the nobility or gentry wish to see it ornamented with flowers, the bearer will bring away as many as they chuse to favour him with.

"As the coronation of Athenais, to be introduced in the fifth act, contains a number of personages more than sufficient to fill all the dressing-rooms, etc., it is hoped no gentlemen and ladies will be offended at being refused admission behind the scenes.

"N. B. The great yard-dog, that made so much noise on Thursday night, during the last act of 'King Richard the Third,' will be sent to a neighbour's over the way; and on account of the prodigious demand for places, part of the stable will be laid into the boxes on one side, and the granary open for the same purpose on the other.

"VIVAT REX."

[1] But five years before, Smith, the accomplished, gentlemanly Smith, from the same seat of learning, smitten with the mania that is incurable, had acted this very character, under circumstances probably neither less ludicrous nor more respectable.

Alas! and human hearts have beat high with hope from temptations such as this; and a mother has thus uneasily struggled to obtain future comfort for the ripened fruit of her womb! The smile on such occasions hurries to the eye, but finds that tender observer of life already admonished and in tears.

But such, or similar artifices, must be constantly used to awaken the curiosity and secure the support of uncultivated audiences; and the long, circumstantial, and often ludicrous title-pages of the first published plays of Shakespeare seem to have served as models to the playbills of succeeding times.

I have noticed in a kindred work the performance of the Princess Elizabeth, in Havard's "Charles the First," by Miss Kemble. Whoever has studied the three views of the monarch's countenance on one canvas, by Vandyke, so finely engraved by Sharp, can hardly fail to have observed the likeness, which certainly exists, between the features of the king and those of the Kemble family. The performance of Havard's play by them must therefore have had a verisimilitude, which, perhaps, no other performers could possibly bestow upon it. At this time it will be remembered that our heroine was extremely beautiful, and an object of very general admiration for the intelligence of her look and the graceful modesty of her deportment.

The frequenters of the theatre are commonly charged with accepting the writers of the drama as authorities for English history. If they looked even further than the page of the poet their curiosity might still remain ungratified by the succinct and popular historians of the day. The great Lord Clarendon supplies an adequate record as to the younger children of the unhappy Charles, and extends his liberality even to the conduct of his murderer. After the death of their father, they were "ordered into the country, that they might not be the objects of respect to draw the eyes and application of people toward them. The allowance was retrenched, that their attendants and servants might be lessened; and order was given that they should be treated without any addition of titles, and that they should sit at their meat as the children of the family did, and all at one table."

They were accordingly removed to the celebrated Penshurst, Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia, and placed under the control of the Countess of Leicester. There for a little time they were happy, in the careful tuition of a Mr. Lovel, who had the charge of the young Earl of Sunderland, whose mother was a daughter of the house of Leicester. Penshurst and its history must have been everything that was soothing to their minds. They were not permitted the protection of its sacred walls for any long time, but taken from the at least gentle

custody of the countess, and sent to the Castle of Carisbrook, to walk in the melancholy footsteps of their father.

A Captain Mildmay commanded in that fortress, and had an allowance for their maintenance; but it was strictly enjoined him, "that he should permit no person to kiss their hands, and that they should in all respects be treated only as the children of a gentleman." The tutor Lovel was sent thither to attend the Duke of Gloucester by his new style of Master Harry. At Carisbrook they remained, says Clarendon, two or three years. "The princess died in this place; and, according to the charity of that time toward Cromwell, very many would have it believed to be by poison; of which there was no appearance nor any proof ever after made."

Her brother the duke was permitted by Cromwell to embark from the Isle of Wight for Holland about the latter end of the year 1652, where he arrived in safety with his tutor Lovel, who had received a treasury warrant for five hundred pounds, to cover the expenses of hiring a vessel and conveying him thither. His mother, Henrietta, had not seen the young prince since he was a twelvemonth old, till she soon after embraced him at Paris. I have been tempted to this detail by some recent publications relative to the treatment of the children of Louis XVI., that, in the contrasted records of periods of guilt and horror

and persecution, they may still exhibit the moral superiority of our countrymen.

This generous or calculating spirit of Cromwell, whichever it might be, is here exhibited; but I cannot withhold from the royalist the satisfaction of a portrait of that usurper, drawn by the masterly hand of Bossuet, who had himself intimately known the queen of Charles I., and from her probably derived much knowledge of those tumultuous times.

"Un homme s'est rencontré d'une profondeur d'esprit incroyable, hypocrite raffiné autant qu'habile politique, capable de tout entreprendre et de tout cacher, également actif et infatigable dans la paix et dans la guerre, qui ne laissait rien à la fortune de ce qu'il pouvait lui ôter par conseil et par prévoyance, mais au reste si vigilant et si prêt à tout, qu'il n'a jamais manqué les occasions qu'elle lui a présentées; enfin un de ces esprits remuants et audacieux qui semblent être nés pour changer le monde."

"A man arose of an incredible depth of mind; as refined a hypocrite as he was a dexterous politician; capable of undertaking all and concealing all; equally active and indefatigable in peace and war; one who left nothing to fortune that he could secure by deliberation and foresight, but, nevertheless, so vigilant and ready, whatever chanced, that he never failed to seize all that occasion presented to him; in a word, one of those stirring and audacious spirits who seem born to alter the condition of the world."

We will now return to the youthful actress, whose performance of the young princess led us to the history of times once received as a precedent

in a neighbouring state, and likely to be a lesson of good or evil to mankind for ever.

It is reported by an old and respected friend of the family, that in her fifteenth year Miss Kemble excited an affection which at a different, though not a very distant, period led to her union with Mr. Siddons. He was, when I knew him first, in the prime of life, a fair and very handsome man, sedate and graceful in his manners; and in his youth was capable of inspiring a passion quite as ardent as his own.

Mr. Siddons, as an actor, was valuable chiefly from his versatility, — he could do anything from Hamlet to harlequin. The parents of Miss Kemble probably expected that their daughter would look beyond the precarious profession of the stage; and, at all events, thought the age of fifteen too early a period to fix a destiny that must be irrevocable. As, however, the youthful lovers were deeply and sincerely engaged to each other, the parents tried the effect of a temporary separation, and for, I think, two years Miss Kemble resided under the protection of Mrs. Greatheed, equally removed from her lover and the stage.

In this retirement she probably regretted the loss of her profession something for itself, more as it seemed identified with her lover. A degree of impatience manifested itself in an application to Mr. Garrick. She privately informed him who she was, and solicited first his judgment, and sec-

ondly, his protection. The reader is to be informed that in all the charms of her youth Miss Kemble repeated some of the speeches of Jane Shore before him, — he knows too by what an eye the music of her speech was heralded. Mr. Garrick seemed highly pleased with her utterance and her deportment; wondered how she had got rid of the old song, the provincial ti-tum-ti; told her how his engagements stood with the established heroines, Yates and Younge, admitted her merits, regretted that he could do nothing for her, and wished her — a good morning.

But that I suppose these initiatory mortifications to be a branch of the profession, I should dissuade the youthful candidate for dramatic honours from an experiment productive of nothing but disappointment. I would not question the knowledge of the art in those who ably profess it; but the only unfailing approach to a London manager is a high provincial reputation, aided here by a death in his company, which leaves a chasm, or a dispute with a performer so important as to require a check. The expressions used at these interviews appear to be a prescriptive formulary, suited equally to Garrick or Rich, Colman or Harris; and the candidate is only obliged by the complaisance which led the manager to lose so many minutes of his most valuable time.

On such occasions the advantage is considerable on the side of the male candidate for theatric

honours, — the great man, if himself an actor, after patiently enduring the nervous sensibility or impudent noise of the débutant, may indulge at least his own ear by showing the young man how the speech should be spoken. My friend, John Bannister, gave me the following accurate detail of his own reception by Garrick; and even in the narrative veneration of the actor, the reader may indulge a smile at the vanity of the manager.

"I was," says the admirable comedian, "a student of painting in the Royal Academy, when I was introduced to Mr. Garrick, — under whose superior genius the British stage then flourished beyond all former example.

"One morning I was shown into his dressing-room, when he was before the glass preparing to shave. A white nightcap covered his forehead; his chin and cheeks were enveloped in soap-suds; a razor-cloth was placed upon his left shoulder, and he turned and smoothed the shining blade with so much dexterity, that I longed for a beard, to imitate his incomparable method of handling the razor.

"'Eh! well — what young man — so — eh! You are still for the stage? Well, now, what character do you, should you like to — eh?'

"'I should like to attempt Hamlet, sir.'

"'Eh, what! Hamlet the Dane? Zounds! that's a bold — a — Have you studied the part?'

"'I have, sir.'

"'Well, don't mind my shaving. Speak your speech, the speech to the Ghost — I can hear you. Come, let's have a roll and a tumble.' (A phrase of his often used to express a probationary specimen.)

"After a few hums and haws, and a disposing of my hair, so that it might stand on end, 'like quills upon the fretful porcupine,' I supposed my father's ghost before me, 'arm'd cap-a-pie,' and off I started.

"'Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
(*He wiped the razor.*)
Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd,
(*He strapped it.*)
Bring with thee airs from heav'n, or blasts from hell!
(*He shaved on.*)
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet!
King, Father, Royal Dane! — O, answer me!
Let me not burst in ignorance.'
(*He lathered again.*)

I concluded with the usual

"'Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?'

but still continued in my attitude, expecting the praise due to an exhibition which I was booby enough to fancy was only to be equalled by himself. But, to my eternal mortification, he turned quick upon me, brandished the razor in his hand, and thrusting his half-shaved face close up to

mine, he made such horrible mouths at me, that I thought he was seized with insanity, and I showed more natural symptoms of being frightened at him than at my father's ghost. 'Angels and ministers! yaw! whaw! maw!' However, I soon perceived my vanity by his ridicule. He finished shaving, put on his wig, and, with a smile of good nature, he took me by the hand. 'Come,' said he, 'young gentleman, — eh, let us see now what we can do.' He spoke the speech — how he spoke it, those who have heard him never can forget. 'There,' said he, 'young gentleman; and when you try that speech again, give it more passion and less mouth.'"

Bannister's reverence for his great master might not lead him to inquire how often this scene had been played in the same place before. But he could hardly fail to perceive that the tutor on the present occasion was at least as fond of exhibition as the pupil.

The delicacy of sex and peculiar style of female declamation deprived Miss Kemble of both the instruction and delight which might have been derived from hearing Mr. Garrick. He, though indeed "Bellona's Bridegroom," confronted the future queen of Macbeth with no "self comparisons;" and, in truth, some impression seems to have been left by this charming woman upon his mind, the result of which, however, but little advanced the professional progress of the actress.

CHAPTER II.

MR. SIDDONS at this time sustained the first line of business in the company under the management of Mr. Kemble. He had not only that universality which in provincial theatres is the first of requisites, but I learn from a most intelligent contemporary, who knew him well, that he possessed the second, a quick study in almost unequalled perfection. My friend informs me that Mr. Siddons could make himself master of the longest dramatic character between night and night, and deliver the language with the accuracy that seems to result only from long application; but so slight, however perfect, was the impression, that it escaped entirely from his memory in as few hours as he had employed in its acquisition.

Without offence to Mr. Siddons, though probably not without pain, Mr. Kemble could unquestionably withdraw his daughter from a profession of which he knew the difficulties, and place her under the protection of a lady, with whom he might suppose brighter prospects would open before his child. However, the young lovers during

their absence maintained a correspondence that kept up the ardour of their affection, and Mr. Siddons was probably acquainted with the step which led Miss Kemble to exhibit something of her talent before Mr. Garrick. The complimentary indifference with which he had frustrated her hopes (and sanguine indeed are the hopes of youth) confirmed the resolution it might have been expected to dispel. Miss Kemble decided upon two points: that she would be an actress, and that she would marry Mr. Siddons, and a journey to Scotland was probably averted by the consent of her parents to their union. Her mother had found happiness not often exceeded in a union of exactly the same kind, and she no doubt overcame the lingering objections of her husband. Mr. Kemble himself gave his daughter's hand to Mr. Siddons before she had completed the eighteenth year of her age.

No doubt, in the language of our romances, "he was the happiest of men." The last chapters of those graceful inventions often severely tax the imaginations of the weary author to supply suitable loveliness to the fancied bride. But it may be received without the smallest scruple, that the Narcissas and Sophias of Smollett and Fielding did not exceed, in any perfection of their lovely sex, the mental and personal graces of Mrs. Siddons.

The young couple had now, however, an establishment to form and to support. With the ascer-

tained existence of great talents in the actress, a veteran critic will record with an indulgent smile the attempt to surprise the caution of Garrick, and secure a town engagement at the outset of a professional career. It was the indiscretion of youth, little aware that, if it could have been obtained, it really ought not then to have been desired. But accident conspired with inclination to precipitate the appearance of Mrs. Siddons in London.

Cheltenham at that time was the resort of fashionable life, but of fashionable life only. The brise of gadding from the capital had not then stung every rank, and made the most moderate fortunes struggle at a watering-place for the appearance of at least pecuniary importance. During Mrs. Siddons's first season at Cheltenham, the springs were, fortunately for her, attended by Lord Bruce, soon after created Earl of Aylesbury, and his accomplished family. His lady was the daughter of Henry Hoare, Esq., of Stourhead, and taste and elegance may be said to have nursed her from her infancy. To be noticed by such patrons was a great advance indeed toward celebrity; and they did not merely content themselves with publicly attending Mrs. Siddons, they honoured her husband and herself with frequent calls at their lodgings, and openly displayed their admiration and esteem. With a kindred feeling, Lord Bruce, too, thought of Garrick and the capital; and

he spoke his opinion so emphatically to the manager, that a more than complimentary attention was thought now due to the actress; and the late Sir Henry Bate Dudley, then the Rev. H. Bate, was requested to attend her performances, and report upon her merits to the awakened patentee.

Managers of theatres have usually at their levees some favoured supporters of the daily press. The satirist is apt to look upon such a commerce with infinite disdain, and the literary aides-de-camp of Garrick could not escape the "Retaliation" of Goldsmith:

"Ye Kenricks, ye Kellys, and Woodfalls so grave,
What a commerce was yours, while you got and you gave!
How did Grub Street reëcho the shouts that you rais'd,
While he was be-Roscius'd, and you were be-prais'd."

To the office of Kenrick the reverend critic above-named might properly succeed; but, had Goldsmith lived to assign him such a place, the doctor himself might have suffered from "retaliation." Bate went upon his mission with Lord Bruce's praises as heralds to his admiration. He saw Mrs. Siddons in various characters, but was most struck with her Rosalind. At eighteen she probably was more like the boy Ganymede than she could subsequently be; and the delicacy of the dependent princess we may be sure was perfectly sustained by a kindred age, a graceful

manner, and the most eloquent intelligence of countenance.

There is every reason to believe that Bate sincerely admired the young actress, and he might think that the best way of serving her with Garrick was to place her entirely at his mercy. Her husband and she were young enough, unsecured by any article, with neither specific salary, choice of parts, or permanent engagement, to condition only for a town appearance, and trust her fame and her interest to the mercy of rivals in possession of the public favour, and to the generosity of Mr. Garrick.

One like myself, so intimately acquainted with the peculiarity as speakers of the whole family of Kemble, will probably err but little in assigning the sort of excellence possessed by Mrs. Siddons on her first appearance. No doubt all those fiery markings of her intellect, those divine sparks that illumined her maturer age, slept unawaked under an exterior of modest beauty, from which such signs of confidence were banished alike by timidity and prudence. In the choice of Portia, too, if she had intended only to show how nearly Shakespeare had delineated her own character, more perfect identity could not well be found. She had her taste, her sensibility, her reflecting dignity, her unexpected powers of almost masculine declamation. But in Portia there was nothing to alarm, to excite, to fire with indignation, or subdue by

tenderness; and for the other qualities, they are seldom felt by an audience, unless previously known, and existing in an established favourite. Mere declamation, however grand or just, never did more than convince the reason; what was here required was to raise an interest by piercing the heart. Had she appeared as Juliet, our ladies might have wept at the sorrows of a Capulet and thought of themselves. At Portia their feelings could be little moved, except such as were excited by human goodness, and ended in almost religious veneration. A sober lesson of oratory kindles no enthusiasm, acquires no popularity. The stage has no medium in its purposes, you must divert or distress.

That excellent prose writer and amiable man, Cowley, seems to have thought that very favourable circumstances were essential to the production of anything which should convey delight to others. "There is nothing," says he, "that requires so much serenity and cheerfulness of spirit; it must not be overwhelmed with the cares of life, or overcast with the clouds of melancholy and sorrow, or shaken and disturbed with the storms of injurious fortune; it must, like the halcyon, have fair weather to breed in. The soul must be filled with bright and delightful ideas, when it undertakes to communicate delight to others."

There is, however, in the temperament of many minds a power to throw aside the pressure of per-

sonal evils, and to call some sweet illusion to the aid, begotten by the fancy, and ending too often in delusion as it began. Such is indeed the professional soul of acting. Whatever be the encumbrances of fortune, and the weight of sorrow, often too of sickness, the assumed part must be supported on the stage, and the overborne feelings of the performer find their indulgence or relief upon the pillow.

It is easy for me to conceive the strong sense entertained at first by Mr. Siddons of the talents of his wife; but, not to judge entirely by the event, I must, from the existing circumstances, consider the time of her coming to town badly chosen. At Garrick's Theatre, there were Miss Younge and Mrs. Yates, often disputing, but constantly occupying, all that was worth doing in tragedy and sober comedy. Mrs. Abington carried the sparkling gaiety or pungent satire of the lighter muse higher than the moderns can conceive. Whom was the new actress to displace, or was she to await a lingering succession, with sometimes the chance, like pretty Mrs. Davies, or the wife of Tom King, of doubling the imperious majesties of Younge, Yates, or Abington? This, to be sure, was the last season of Garrick, and therefore the stage was likely to want attraction on his retirement; but it should have come from the other sex. To bring forward Mrs. Siddons, and allow her no business of importance, was without a hope of attraction to

the theatre, and a cruel injury to her fame. She submitted, however, to her ill chance, and I am to preserve a particular account of the first season in London of the greatest actress whom the world perhaps ever saw. It had no advantage but one, namely, that she had a close opportunity of studying the tragic excellence that she was, seven years after, to rival or surpass: besides the two heroines of her own theatre, and the closing performances of Mr. Garrick, Barry and his wife were acting this season at the other house, and she had many opportunities of appreciating merits all of the highest rank, however differing from each other. She retained nothing whatever that reminded you of those who had preceded her.

It was on Friday, the 29th of December, 1775, that this great woman made her first appearance on the London boards in the character of Portia; she was announced as "a young lady" merely; and the arts of instilling favour into the town, if they were then known, were not in her case practised: the playbills were only inserted in two journals of that day, the *Public Advertiser* and the *Gazetteer;* and the theatrical notices were confined to a very coolly coloured paragraph, dated from each theatre, and announcing, with modest penury of phrase, a performance to have been received either with great or very great applause. Taking all the even modern advantages of underlining at the foot of a bill inviting the town to see an unknown young lady in

Portia on the Friday, they were told that Saturday would, at all events, be sure of its delight; for, in "The Mourning Bride" of Congreve, Miss Younge was to appear in Zara, and Mrs. Yates in Almeria.

Old Sheridan acted Hamlet, which might not do her much harm, at the other house; but King in Shylock at Drury Lane could only remind the judicious of what was wanting. As an actor, that gentleman had nerve, vigour, point, and precision; but take away passion from Shylock, and he is "poor indeed;" that very word itself, as spoken by Henderson, was a volume of impression, —

> "Hath not a Jew eyes; —
> Organs, dimensions, senses, affections, — PASSIONS?"

King spoke the Jew as he spoke Touchstone in the degrees of the lie, or Puff in the mystery of puffing, which the reader, of our times at least, knows to be the same thing. Bassanio was supported by the nasal solemnity of Bensley, a singular lover for a young lady not of age. Reddish acted Antonio, and Vernon, the Viganoni of English opera, sang to the gentle Jessica; that lovely Hebrew was represented by a Miss Jarrett, and the pretty Mrs. Davies before mentioned, as Clerk, attended our female barrister into court.

The afterpiece on this occasion was "The Jubilee," that season revived with much vogue. Mrs. Siddons was received with great applause, and repeated the character of Portia on the Tuesday fol-

lowing. The second night was weakness reduced to absolute certainty; as if the strength of Saturday had not been sufficient, Monday presented the Lady Macbeth of Mrs. Yates, which was by many degrees the best, until the maturity of her unthought-of follower appropriated the royal murderess to herself.

Mrs. Siddons then waited till the 13th of January for one of the Ladies Collegiate in Ben Jonson's "Epicœne," which had been restored to the stage by Colman. That not more excellent wit than critic, on this occasion, fairly told the town that "he considered it as one of the principal duties of a director of a theatre to atone in some measure for the mummery which his situation obliges him to exhibit, by bringing forward the productions of our most esteemed writers." Garrick assisted him in his object, for he had constantly managed upon the system of revivals. In the following year Mr. Colman collected and published his dramatic productions; but, in 1777, he had no ambition to record that Mrs. Siddons ever acted in "The Silent Woman," and her name is omitted among the performers, though he professes to give the cast in 1776. The three lady graces in his book are Miss Sherry, Mrs. Davies, and Miss Platt.

The reader has seen that Bate's report of our actress decided the great manager to receive her; though, as to his heroines, he was precisely in

the same situation as he was when he recently refused her. Probably her gratitude, certainly not her fame, led her to accept a part of trifling moment, in an opera by Bate, called "The Blackamoor Washed White." In the bills of the day, her Virgilian name stood undistinguished in the crowd, in the same secondary type with that of Mrs. Bradshaw, and the stately conjunction, so ambitiously coveted on such occasions, was thus attended:

AND

MRS. WRIGHTEN.

But this great negro experiment was reserved for other times, and I hope a clergy less lay in their manners than the author. The piece received some alterations on its second performance, in vain; on its third it was preceded by Garrick's "Lusignan;" but, as the audience came to see that great actor, very few indeed cared for further entertainment, and the afterpiece also that night retired from the house.

At length, on the 15th of February, Mrs. Siddons, still unpromoted, marched in Mrs. Cowley's comedy of "The Runaway," which a very dexterous application of Mr. and Mrs. Garrick, combined with much sprightly talent of the author, carried on for seventeen nights, I think, during its first season; and in doing so gave our charming woman so many opportunities of at least showing her per-

son on the stage. But Miss Younge here was the magnet, and indeed nearly all that could be wished.

Mrs. Siddons was "to sound the very base string of humility," by actually performing in a farce of Vaughan's, called "Love's Metamorphoses." Being the busy friend of Murphy, he contrived not to be overlooked by the satirist Churchill, and is thus preserved under the name of Dapper in "The Rosciad." As a writer, Vaughan had very slender power; but he long continued, like Master Mathew, to detail in society his various "toys of the Muses;" and could, at all events, tell many agreeable stories of the wits and geniuses who had countenanced his youth. He had been also clerk of the peace for Westminster, and, fortunately for conversation, had less law about him than poetry.

In the beginning of my literary career I found myself in the society of this gentleman, and thought him supremely happy in the graceful accomplishments of his daughter. She, too, wrote verses in the daily prints, and assumed the signature of Cesario; I suppose from some fanciful reference to the character of Viola, then rendered beyond measure enchanting in the melodious tones of Mrs. Jordan. But the "Metamorphoses" of Vaughan had none of the Ovidian perpetuity about them; and Mrs. Siddons was released at once from transformations that were anything but poetical.

Let not our readers be impatient to see the object of their admiration so long dishonoured. Some little gratification attached even to her first season in town. Mr. Garrick did not seem unwilling to employ her; but he either did not desire her qualifications to move in a higher sphere, or that region was too exclusively occupied to allow of her invasion. She had, at all events, the means of closely studying the great master of the art, and he at length trusted her in a scene of some importance to himself, by casting her into Mrs. Strictland, in Hoadley's admirable "Suspicious Husband," when he was to leave the parting impression of his excellence, in the character of Ranger.

As far as the talents of Mrs. Siddons ever tended to comedy, nothing could suit her better than to represent this young, lovely, and timid wife, — the choice showed very exact judgment in the manager. The three epithets equally indicated the actress. When, going to her station in the bedchamber, she heard the smart and pointed manner of Garrick, and from the wing saw him ascend the ladder, no doubt she felt some alarm, — how she should conduct herself in the scene with him, which was immediately to follow; and hoped, probably prayed, that she might not diminish his usual brilliant effect. No doubt it was the recollection of his vivacity that made her exclaim to a friend of mine, after seeing a modern

Ranger, whose pleasantry is of a more sober cast (sober is not the right word, solemn may be rather better): "'Up — I — go?' bless me! is that the tone of comedy in the 'modern school?'" The popularity of the performance must be the only answer to the question.

As it has been doubted whether Mr. Garrick was really friendly to Mrs. Siddons, it should be remembered here that "The Suspicious Husband" had then not been acted for two years; that he might, in casting the play, have passed her over, if he had not intended to serve her; and his favourable if not very high opinion may be presumed from the bringing her into close contact with himself. It was just upon the close of his career, on the 23d of May, 1776, that he revived the play. The performance was repeated. On this occasion, her type was enlarged in the bill. She occupied a whole line herself, thus:

"Mrs. Strictland . . . MRS. SIDDONS."

The mention of this play reminds me of a critical debt to the memory of the ingenious author. It is known, I hope to but few persons, that, with the usual authoritative and slashing decision of youth, I once ventured to write criticisms upon the masters of dramatic composition. I am ashamed of the style in which I dared to speak of this comedy — but the avowal, and the atonement,

shall at least last as long as I am at all remembered. A few hours only have passed away since I attentively perused this play, and I read it with delight, only interrupted by a burning blush at my injustice. No; "The Suspicious Husband" has none of the wit of Congreve, but it has all his vivacity, and makes nearer approaches to the language of life. That happiest of our wits had little structure, and what he has seems always forced. The structure of "The Suspicious Husband" is admirable, and the incidents in the highest degree probable; those of "The Wonder," by Mrs. Centlivre, are not happier in their contrivances to excite or appease the jealousy of Don Felix than Hoadley has supplied to occupy the sullen and constitutional distress of Mr. Strictland. There is a unity, too, in this play that should be pointed out, — every interest converges toward Strictland. The gaiety of Clarinda contributes to his jealousy; the elopement of Jacintha excites the same feeling — the pursuit of Frankly, the perseverance of Bellamy, the vinous flights of Ranger, all excite or confirm him in his folly.

In points of contrivance, what can be better than Lucetta's interference to save her mistress's honour, when the hat of Ranger is discovered by her master in his lady's apartment? First snatching away the hat really worn in her boy's dress by Jacintha, and then prompting her with "Is not the hat yours? own it, madam!" Seconded, too,

so admirably by the nonchalance of the young runaway :

"Dear Mrs. Strictland, be not concerned. When he has diverted himself a little longer with it, I suppose he will give me my hat again."[1]

Very easy, and natural, too, is Strictland's tearing open the letter of Frankly to Clarinda, and dropping the envelope before he reads it. When that is brought to his notice, what can be finer than its not carrying conviction to the jealous mind, and his exclamation alone, "They must be poor indeed at the work, if they will not lend one another their names."

It has occurred to other critics that Strictland resembles Kitely; and indeed few authors have left such palpable instances of their admiration of their predecessors as Doctor Hoadley exhibits in the present play. The student of Ben Jonson will have preserved a dear recollection of the scene in "Every Man in His Humour," where Kitely deliberates whom he should entrust with the secret of his suspicions, and employ as a spy upon his wife. This scene, the second of the third act, is feebly but distinctly echoed by Hoad-

[1] I should not be surprised if this were in Mrs. Cholmondeley's recollection, when, upon Johnson's seizing her hand, and admiring its delicate whiteness and beautiful form, she exclaimed, "I wonder whether he will give it me again, when he has done with it?"

ley in the third scene of his own second. The same incident of beginning an impartment to Cash, and suddenly thinking Cob a preferable person; then dismissing the amendment, and recurring to the original motion, is identical in the latter work. Strictland commences with Lucetta, then resorts to Tester as the fitter object, rejects Tester, and returns to Lucetta. The modern follows his master, even to the language of his exit.

"*Strict.* There is no hell on earth like being a slave to suspicion,"

is a prose translation of the second line of Jonson's final couplet —

"*Kite.* No greater hell than to be slave to fear."

The invention of the incidents and their rapid succession, their admirable fitness for the stage, and the power of exhibiting the talents of the actor, all here seem to imply a long exercise of dramatic composition, and a mind devoted to the object. The business is so perfectly native to the stage that one might fancy it suggested by such a man as Mr. Garrick. The coincidence was striking, too, that exhibited "The Suspicious Husband," and Doctor Johnson's prologue, and the improved state of Drury Lane Theatre, in the same year, 1747.

Hitherto it will be remarked that nothing had been done for Mrs. Siddons in tragedy. Bate had

chiefly admired her Rosalind, and in town she had been allowed to touch nothing but comedy. But she was, even under Garrick, just permitted

> "To peep at what she would —
> Act little of her will."

The great actor had determined to revive "Richard the Third," which he had discontinued for five years, and he assigned the part of Lady Anne to Mrs. Siddons. She there met Roscius in all his terrors, and on the first night hung a little back from timidity. I have mentioned, in another work, the glance of reproach that corrected the failure, and the extreme sensibility with which it was long retained. But she had an opportunity to retrieve her credit with him, when they repeated the characters on the 3d of June; and she had the honour to support him on his third appearance in Richard, which was by command of their Majesties, on the 5th of June. But, whatever he thought of her, and whatever might be his intentions, he closed his own brilliant career five days afterward in the character of Don Felix, and left her to a dismissal, which had, perhaps, been arranged some time before. Some little honour had been paid to her in the bills of both these plays; her name looked something in them; and the style of announcing her first appearance, in Mrs. Strictland and Lady Anne, augured more present estimation than was retained

by the new management. How her noble patrons were appeased on the occasion I know not. The actress felt herself to be deeply injured, and retired from a scene that presented little but mortification.

When Mr. Garrick resumed his performances after the Christmas holidays, he announced his characters for the last time; and drew very fashionable audiences to his Abel Drugger, Sir Ant. Brainville, his Hamlet (which he acted with his alterations), his Ranger, and his King Lear. The fund for the benefit of the decayed actors was this last season doubly indebted to him; he performed Hamlet for them on the 30th of May, and Don Felix on the 10th of the month following, his last appearance on the stage.

It has by many been supposed that Mr. Garrick was ungenerous and insincere with respect to Mrs. Siddons; that he saw her vast talent, and from a mean jealousy threw it into shade. But it may be fair to inquire what proofs he had received of the possession then of that genius, which, six years after, it was impossible to dispute? He had seen her in comedy; had we only seen her in comedy, who among us would have presumed her tragic excellent, or even discerned the beauties which our love has since detected, in certain characters in the train of Thalia? He placed her by his side in Richard; she herself acknowledges alarm and confusion. How was he to anticipate,

in the trembling Lady Anne, the future Katharine and Constance and Lady Macbeth, before whom the long line of theatric queens were all to fade away, and leave to her alone the glory of being in fame associated with himself? "But he might be jealous of Mrs. Siddons!" Ay, to be sure; at most, however, as he might be of that which he had formed and cherished, — the talent of Mrs. Yates, and Miss Younge, and Mrs. Abington at his own theatre, and of Mrs. Barry at the other. But does anybody, even now, believe that Mrs. Siddons, at twenty, was equal to these actresses, or near them in excellence? If it was her future power that alarmed him, how could his present conduct destroy its efficacy? This was his last season; if then she did not touch him, as to his own impression, she was nothing. She had been born an actress, bred an actress, and married an actor; her relatives for generations had followed the profession; there was no chance, therefore, of driving a hearted love of it from the stage.

There is one more conjecture formed, which imputes caprice, as a slight addition to injustice: "Mr. Garrick loved to discover for himself; and did not like to have 'greatness thrust' upon his notice by others." Our self-love has rendered this feeling common to our nature; and to pursue such a course of criticism is, in fact, to censure Garrick for not being superior to humanity. But fame loves a lofty mark, and the pinion must be

strong to support even an eagle flight to her temple. It was a real service to Mrs. Siddons to arouse her reflection by impediment, and increase the force by distant campaigns, that was at length to dispose in triumph of the capital itself. Let it be remembered too, that she declaimed only in Portia, and that Mr. Garrick himself excelled in the wild and fiery breaks of passion. We always most love a merit congenial with our own: now we have the authority of Doctor Johnson himself that the declamation of Garrick was not excellent. The commencement of this young and interesting lady was thwarted by many difficulties; she had none of the welcome with which the Poet of Nature has adorned the advent of Beauty. She but walked in the character of Venus.

> "Te Dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila cœli,
> Adventumque tuum: tibi suaveis dædala tellus
> Summittit flores; tibi rident æquora ponti,
> Placatumque nitet diffuso lumine cœlum."

Creech, though an editor of Lucretius, lost all the charm of these lines in his translation; the mellifluous Dryden has preserved it beyond all praise.

"Thee, goddess, thee, the clouds and tempests fear,
And at thy pleasing presence disappear:
For thee the land in fragrant flowers is drest;

For thee the ocean smiles, and smooths her wavy breast;
And Heaven itself with more serene and purer light is blest."

In the year 1782 the above did not exceed the triumphant gratulation which she experienced.

Having thus attended Mrs. Siddons through her first season in London, it may be proper to review the stage itself, during one rendered important by many concurring events, besides that most important one that could ever happen, — the retirement of Mr. Garrick himself.

The manager did not, in a literary sense, neglect his last season; he opened it by a prelude, called "The Theatrical Candidates," written by himself; and so early as the 28th of October produced a musical farce for Miss Abrams, called "May Day; or, The Little Gipsy," in which Weston made his last appearance on the stage. He died on the 12th of January, 1776, at his lodgings in Newington, Surrey. This actor has always been placed at the head of his class, and had merely to show himself to accomplish the full task of the low comedian. It must have been by strong effort that Mr. Garrick kept down the speaking intelligence of his own eye, and that harmony of the whole features, which indicates the purity and polish of the mind, to express only the sordid cunning and gross ignorance of Abel Drugger. He had seen such a being in life, or conceived him from Jonson, and therefore could represent

the veriest of dolts. Still it must have been evident —

> "By what compulsion and laborious flight
> He sunk thus low."

But Weston was the thing itself; — so that as, of later days, in the case of Emery, it might be almost questioned whether it were acting at all; since the man excited precisely the same feeling in his profession and out of it. Our very admiration itself marks the distinction between the two exhibitions of nature and of art, — the first secures an unreflecting enjoyment; the second a wonder, also, at the skill that could render imitation so exact.

On the 21st of November, 1775, Mr. Sheridan, then only in the twenty-third year of his age, produced, at Covent Garden Theatre, the comic opera of "The Duenna." It ran sixty-five nights during its first season, and therefore claims the second place among English operas. But, what was really honourable to Sheridan, it obtained this high rank —

> "Without one bribe to luxury or vice."

He had a very simple Spanish plot, on which his characters were to work: young ladies and their governantes — their lovers and parents. The secret of "The Beggar's Opera" was political, though hardly felt to be so. It seemed like the

inquisition of justice into privileged atrocity, and took the usual vulgar liberty of a saturnalian abuse of authority. An inverse ratio of morals was displayed, and there is a melancholy avowal at last "that even highwaymen cannot be true to one another!" The lower instruments of justice are shown in close connection with the robber, and whether to save or destroy him is an affair of simple calculation. Here are charms irresistible indeed to bad taste.

"The Duenna" is gay without indecorum, — though it may be doubted whether, since the Reformation of Luther, any monasteries have displayed the festivities of Father Paul to the envy of any lay attendant. Sheridan follows Dryden in his humour, and happily follows him, too, in his lyrical effusions. But as to the stage, the power to resemble that great man ended where and when it began. Sheridan has one marked propriety in his songs, — they are not mere vehicles for music; a sort of tender or whimsical *à propos*, with little or no relation to character or business; they carry on always the dialogue or resolutions of the persons engaged; their meaning is essential to the display of the interest.

Sheridan never himself printed this opera, which I think was published by the authority of the proprietor of Covent Garden Theatre, in whom the copyright, I believe, was vested by the author's original bargain. This notion of keeping back the

drama from the press is in its design impolitic, and always ineffectual. Copies must be allowed to the country theatres, and the production finds its way speedily to the Irish printer, who receives it perhaps full of errors, and, at best, strictly preserves them all. Publication never yet diminished the attraction of the stage. The number of books sold nightly in our theatres proves this decisively. To delay it is to gratify the first thirst of curiosity with an impure draught; and when the genuine fountain of the muse is permitted to play, it is unregarded by the many, and runs to waste, or into the reservoirs only of the collector.

On the day following the production of "The Duenna," viz. the 22d November, died Sir John Hill. The masterly character of him, by Churchill, was in fact his history:

> "With sleek appearance, and with ambling pace,
> And type of vacant head, with vacant face,
> The Proteus Hill put in his modest plea,
> 'Let Favour speak for others, Worth for me.'
> For who, like him, his various pow'rs could call
> Into so many shapes, and shine in all?
> Who could so nobly grace the motley list,
> Actor, Inspector, Doctor, Botanist?
> Knows any one so well — sure no one knows —
> At once to play, prescribe, compound, compose?"

Among the authors of these islands, Hill, as to quantity, stood alone, until the present day displayed at all events the works of the writer of the

Scottish novels. The author of "The Vegetable System," in twenty-six volumes in folio, was at once frivolous and laborious. He dressed more gaily than any man about town, was the prominent feature at all public amusements, was the great critic and libellist of his day, engaged in endless controversies, and sometimes personal altercations; and yet, by a diligence for which he only could find the time, he was employed by the booksellers upon works which for the most part proceed from such beings as only visit the "glimpses of the moon," — men of extinguished ambition and sullen diligence, the rewriters of forgotten facts, and sometimes the unravellers of entangled science. Hill wrote in the supplement to Chambers, a body of natural history, and "The Vegetable System." Essays and magazines were shaken as scattered leaves from his vast trunk. Botany was his first and fond pursuit, — botany led him to stroll into the country from his shop in St. Martin's Lane, and strolling led him to think of acting as a resource; but it was not the dramatic stage to which the talents of Hill were suited, — that of the mountebank claimed him as its Roscius, and blazoned his genius to distant ages as the father of quack simplicity. Who has not heard of the "Essence of Water-Dock," "The Tincture of Valerian," "The Pectoral Balsam of Honey," and "The Tincture of Bardana?"

As Hill was often, in his quality of inspector, offensive to the stage, so he sometimes provoked the castigation of Garrick and his friends, and a stream of epigrams attested the doctor's severity, or his impertinence. In the way of address and reply, some of these had wit enough to gall a man of any sensibility.

"To take thy own physic and read thy own rhymes,"

was neatly answered by —

"If he takes his physic first,
He'll never read his rhymes."

To the attack upon Mr. Garrick, for pronouncing the letter I as if it were an U, Roscius promised amendment, with too little consideration, perhaps, of the nature of ours and of other languages. All the attempts as to either E or I to be discriminated, before the letter R, from the vowel U, will foil the neatest speaker, and sound affected even when done. The reader may easily try his own dexterity in the words Bertram, Birnam, and Burney. The unequalled point in Garrick's epigram shall close the subject of Sir John Hill's honours:

"May the right use of letters, as well as of men,
Hereafter be fix'd by the tongue and the pen:
Most devoutly I wish that they both have their due,
And that *I* may be never mistaken for *U*."

I have already pointed to the great rival talents at Covent Garden Theatre, to show what I considered the impolicy of Mrs. Siddons's town appearance. Barry was acting even against the *chef-d'œuvre* of Garrick, and melodiously breathing —

"The well-applauded tenderness of Lear."

Perhaps there is an implied censure in this seeming panegyric by Churchill. The aged monarch has, to be sure, one scene of affecting imbecility, — the jarring senses, overborne by the fierce storm of insanity, faint into a deliquium, from which state only they can be again recovered to the truth of their functions.

But to characterise a Lear by his tenderness only is to assert the absence of what was vital to the character, — starts of ungovernable passion from one —

"Who lov'd, not wisely, but too well."

With his heart always flying to his own lips, nothing but the incessant profession of love for him satisfies him of its existence. To oppose his will, on any ground, is treason to his blood. He has no time for reflection. He throws off the darling among his daughters; banishes the hated trunk of obnoxious fidelity from his dominions; resigns, without the caution of Ulysses,[1] his ears to the sirens; is despised, ejected, exposed to the howl-

[1] See the Odyssey of Homer, Lib. xii. l. 178.

ing tempest, goes distracted; is for a time recovered under the care of that filial piety which he had injured, to break the last string of his aged heart over the corpse of that angelic child, who had perished in the effort to restore him to his throne.

It was such a view of the character that rendered Mr. Garrick's Lear so transcendent. In the opinion of the ablest critics, he in no other part so much surpassed the efforts of other men. To build only upon Lear's feebleness is to show that you cannot reach his force. But where can praise be found that will not sully the poetical creator of Lear? That this wonderful work of nature's favourite son should ever have been exposed to the horrible *rifacimento* of the Parisian stage, that he should have been studded with little glittering points and closet antitheses, and sent forth in only the declining taste of Voltaire, moves alike our wonder and indignation.

After struggling in vain to translate the curse into French verse, Ducis arrives at the terrific close, where the unnatural mother is to feel the pang beyond the serpent's tooth, a thankless child. He then indulges the modern Athenians with —

> "C'en est fait, mon ami, j'ai cessé d'être père."
> "My friend, 'tis done, — I am no more a father."

In the scene where Cordelia tries the effect of the great "assay of art" upon her father, the

reader remembers the questions which nature and Shakespeare put into her mouth ; let him take the following on the authority of M. Ducis :

"*Cor.* Do you remember you were a *King?*
Lear. No: but I remember I was a *Father.*"

The critics of France predicted the immortality of this distinction ; but Maty told them that, from the nature of Lear's malady, he could not recollect he was a father, without remembering that he was a dethroned one. I think I hear the happy *sang-froid* of the reply: "*Ah! ma foi! mais c'est sublime.*"

Barry and his wife, this season, acted Jaques and Rosalind for the benefit of Woodward, who himself performed Touchstone. Lewis, the airy, the mercurial, who infused so large a portion of the *vis comica* into the last thirty years of the stage, was then acting Orlando, and hearing Mrs. Mattocks in Celia sing the "Cuckoo song." [1] Though he, as a

[1] The youth of Lewis, with all its sparkling captivations, was not undistinguished by the sex. Among his foreign admirers he had the honour to number the celebrated Gabrielli. On her arrival in this country, she paid a visit to Covent Garden Theatre, and was powerfully struck by the graces of Lewis. As an Italian singer is usually little disposed to refuse herself any attainable object of her wishes, she resolved to send off love's ambassador with the frank declaration of her passion, and a gracious command to Mercutio to visit her immediately. Rauzzini, however, changed the arrangement, by apprising the Gabrielli that the habits of this country did not allow of such

comedian, served under Woodward, Lewis copied nothing from him but his harlequin activity. Lee Lewes preserved more; for he imitated the stunted hoarseness of his voice, and would have been a perfect resemblance had he possessed the mind of his original. For Woodward had a good deal of talent of the sportive kind. A parody of his from "Cato," on the opening of Covent Garden Theatre, in 1773, admits a few extracts to his honour.

"We learn from sure advice, that with bold haste
The ruffian winter — whom so late we chac'd
With mirth and song — returns once more to wage
Invidious war, and musters all his rage.
How shall we treat this bold impetuous foe?
How foil his malice and divert the blow?
Already has our wisdom found it meet
To issue forth our high theatric writ,
And call you from your insecure retreats;
Your distant palaces, your country seats;
Your village lodgings, and your evening rambles."

After counselling war, and enumerating the dramatic forces now taking the field, he, in the sovereign style, addresses the representatives of the nation:

rapid movements, even in matters of the first taste. She reluctantly yielded to his experience, and thus, in the language of Burke, "gave a domination (so repeatedly) vanquisher of laws, to be subdued by manners." The great historian, too, here pleasingly reminds us of our German ancestors. "*Plusque ibi boni mores valent, quam alibi bonæ leges.*" — *Tacit. de Mor. Germ.*

"Thus leagu'd and arm'd, it cannot sure surprise
Our loving people, if we ask supplies.
Our just expenses various are and great;
Our gods take subsidies — our dead must eat;
Our Ministers have strict commands to lay
The bills before you — that, from day to day,
Yourselves may judge the whole with critic eye,
And see the services your aids supply."

From such a man a Bobadil might be expected, rich in humour, "planet-struck," something beyond the ignorant bluster that since has disgraced Jonson and the stage.

The lovers of comedy should mark the 19th of June with a stone of brilliant whiteness, for on that day Edwin made his first appearance at the Haymarket, in Foote's "Cozeners." He succeeded Weston in Toby, and displayed all the graces of the Aircastle family. Oh, that inimitable tree of collateral relation, branching out into endless ramification, and losing himself in his own luxuriance! Hear him, and seek him out among your friends of all times.

"*Air.* Did not I tell you what Parson Prunello said? — I remember Mrs. Lightfoot was by — she had been brought to bed, that day was a month, of a very fine boy — a bad birth; for Doctor Seeton, who served his time with Luke Lancet of Guise's — there was also a talk about him and Nancy the daughter — she afterward married Will Whitlow, another apprentice, who had great expectations from an old uncle in the Grenades; but he left all to a distant relation, Kit Cable, a midshipman aboard the *Tor-*

bay — she was lost coming home, in the channel — the captain was taken up by a coaster from Rye, loaded with cheese.

"*Mrs. Air.* Mercy upon me, Mr. Aircastle, at what a rate you run on! What has all this to do with our coming to London?

"*Air.* Why I was going to tell you — but you will never have patience."

Surely this is really to revive the Quicklys and the Pompeys; or rather to read a page of nature with that piercing eye that our too exclusive admiration places only in the head of Shakespeare.

The original of this fine sketch, for Foote rarely finished anything, was an Irish gentleman of the name of Gahagan, as the author himself told my friend Henderson. Whether Gahagan was aware of the liberty which the wit took with his peculiarities, I cannot say; but, however that may be, when Foote died, his Aircastle wrote a character of him; and I presume the reader, in his love of retributive justice, will not be sorry to see it here. Allowing for the exaggeration of farce, it has positively a strong resemblance, in composition, to the rapid manner, and quick transition, and uncommon returns to his subject, with which the English Aristophanes displayed his airy friend.

CHARACTER OF THE LATE MR. FOOTE.

"He was a very extraordinary man, and had talents which he abused. He abounded in wit, humour, and sense; but he was so fond of detraction and mimicry, that he

might be properly called a buffoon; and they were a great blemish in his conversation, though he entertained you. He was generally civil to your face, and seldom put you out of humour with yourself; but you paid for his civility the moment you turned your back, and were sure of being made ridiculous. He was not so malignant as some I have known, but his excessive vanity led him into satire and ridicule. He was vain of his classical knowledge (which was but superficial), and of his family, and used to boast of his numerous relations in the West of England. He was most extravagant and baubling, but not generous. He delighted in buying rings, snuff-boxes, and toys, which were a great expense to him; and he lost money at play, and was a dupe with all his parts. He loved wine and good living, and was a mighty pretender to skill in cookery, though he did not understand a table so well as he thought; he affected to like dishes and ragouts, and could not bear to eat plain beef or mutton, which showed he had a depraved appetite; he spared no expense in his dinners, and his wine was good. He was very disgusting in his manner of eating, and not clean in his person; but he was so pleasant, and had such a flow of spirits, that his faults and foibles were overlooked. He always took the lead in company, and was the chief or sole performer. He had such a rage for shining, and such an itch for applause, that he often brought to my mind Pope's lines on the Duke of Wharton: [How, how, my dear Aircastle?]

> "'Though senates hung on all he spoke,
> The mob must hail him master of the joke.'

"He loved lords' company, though he gave himself airs of despising them, and treating them cavalierly. He was licentious and sensual, — made a jest of religion and morality, and of all worthy men. He told a story very pleasantly and added many circumstances of his own invention to

heighten it. He had a good choice of words and apt expressions, and could speak very well upon grave subjects; but he soon grew tired of serious conversation, and returned naturally to his favourite subject, mimicry, in which he did not excel; for he drew caricatures by which he made you laugh more than a closer mimic. He was a coarse actor, yet he played the parts in his own plays better than any who have appeared in them since his death; for instance, Major Sturgeon, Aircastle, Cadwallader, etc.

"He had a flat, vulgar face, without expression; but where a part was strongly ridiculous he succeeded, for he always ran into farce; so that I have been often surfeited with him on the stage, and never wished to see him twice in the same character. Though he wanted simplicity in acting, yet he was a very good judge of the stage; but so unfair and so disposed to criticise, that you could not depend upon his opinion.

"As a writer, he certainly had merit, and afforded great entertainment to the town for many years. If he had taken more pains in finishing his pieces, they would have been equal to most of our comedies; but he was too indolent and too idle to carry them to perfection.

"Upon the whole, his life and character would furnish a subject for a good farce, with an instructive moral. It would show that parts alone are of little use without prudence or virtue; and that flashes of wit and humour give only a momentary pleasure, but no solid entertainment."

CHAPTER III.

THE new managers, Sheridan, Linley, and Forde, had not deemed the talents of Mrs. Siddons essential to their plan. It is extremely probable that, as Colman sportively told their first audience, they did build much upon opera. Who, indeed, but Sheridan, after the amazing run of "The Duenna," would have delayed a month in starting again upon the same course? He had Linley with him, — they could reciprocally suggest dramatic and musical hints; but, against all calculation, as if he loved to disappoint every human expectation, he never wrote a second opera.

Mr. Garrick had quitted the stage; but he did not expect to be speedily forgotten, and, indeed, laboured to adorn his retirement with the regret and the fondness of the public. He loved to read that Shakespeare and Jonson and Fletcher had retired with him, and that all which was natural had quitted the stage with his Don Felix. His kindred spirit, Colman, with the characteristic of Tydeus, —

"Major in exiguo regnabat corpore virtus," —[1]

[1] Statius, "Theb." Lib. i. l. 417.

to pay the compliments of the new management, and meet the expectation of the old, had infused his very soul into a prelude, called "New Brooms." Of all the specimens left by himself or others of this agreeable entertainment, perhaps this is unquestionably the best. I shall amuse myself, and I hope no few of my readers, by a notice of its whimsical and pointed style.

Roscius is represented by Catcall as bringing houses full as an egg; but he adds, "He is gone off with the meat, and a whole crew of new managers are putting to sea in the egg-shell." Phelim, an Irishman, by the national representative Moody, blundered out no unacceptable praise. "The little man was so grate himself, there was no room for anybody else." The same learned person, to show little Roscius the difference, stumbles upon another compliment to him in "Richard II.:"

> "As in a theatre the eyes of men,
> After a well-grac'd actor leaves the stage,
> Are idly bent on him that enters next."

Upon the expected reign of opera, we have some very pleasant sarcasm from Crotchet, — the dialogue is, it seems, "refreshed by an air every instant. Two gentlemen meet in the park, for example, admire the place and the weather, and after a speech or two, the orchestra take their cue, the music strikes up, one of the characters

takes a genteel turn or two on the stage during the symphony, and then breaks out: 'When the breezes fan the trees-es,' etc."

Sir Dulcimer Dunder is a sketch of a deaf man passionately fond of music. He would recover his hearing now, when it has become the practice to take it away from common organs by the infernal noise made by the Germans. In this view of it, Colman says, "Lady Towzer could never hear but in a mill. The clack of common conversation made no sort of impression on her. And Lord Thickness, for the very same reason, built his fine new house over against a trunk-maker, and next door to a pewterer."

Sprightly, however, delivers the taste and principles of the new managers. "The old drama, opera, and pantomime may, indeed, dance the hayes on the stage, like the sun, moon, and earth, in 'The Rehearsal' — sometimes one in eclipse, and sometimes another. Opera or pantomime may, for a season, cause a temporary obscurity, as the dull earth may now and then stand in its own light; but tragedy and comedy, like the sun and moon, will continue to be the life, delight, and chief support of the English theatre."

Hear our exquisite Phelim on this figurative eloquence.

"*Phelim.* By my sowle he has so boddered me with eyes and ears and eclipses, that I am quite in the dark, my dear."

The piece ends with a prophetic prologue, "that the old stage will run for ever." The vehicle then must be neat, the horses sound, the straw clean, and the driver sober.

Murphy wrote "News from Parnassus" for Covent Garden Theatre, and his prelude, too, wafted incense toward Garrick at Hampton.

"*Boccalini.* Shakespeare himself retired to the banks of the Avon, and he wishes Roscius a happy retreat on the bank of the Thames. Apollo has decreed him a laurel crown for his services, and has promised him a new wreath, should he again appear for the theatrical fund, or upon any other occasion."

Murphy's Rebus certainly suggested the moral drama to Sheridan's Sneer, and Vellum has honoured Mr. Puff with some newspaper suggestions. Murphy did too much here for a prelude, and too little for a farce. Colman hit the exact trifle.

One rule, however, Murphy has laid down to managers, which should govern all revivals of our great authors. "If new plays of value cannot be had, let them revive the old, but be sparing of alterations. They may lop excrescences, and remove indecency; but the form in which the fathers of the drama left their works shows their own frame of thought, and ought to be respected." But even such a principle cannot be allowed to operate upon editions of an author's works, because they who cannot make allowances for

changing manners are no fit readers of such books. And youth may be suffered to delay the perusal of works which maturity alone should meddle with, on many accounts.

When Bowdler mentioned his scheme of a purified Shakespeare to Doctor Harrington, "No, no, sir," said the old gentleman, "let us, when we have the woodcock, enjoy the little trail on the toast." One of the wittiest illustrations that I have ever heard. But so it is, — finding in that great man a stream of ethical knowledge fertilising his various soil, we are for constituting him the sole teacher of morals; and extract his aphorisms as substitute for graver authorities.

We are so fond of this fancied Academus of ours, the playhouse, that we have begun to invest the player himself with a sort of philosophic dignity; from one extreme we have passed to another, and as Johnson deemed a player too low to be honoured even with gratitude for the good he had done,[1] so we seem to think him morally too high to be endured in the common disorders of his species. In the case of an actor, whose habits of life were long known to us, — when his profligacy could surprise no one, and the other parties were none of the purest, — a critic of the new school turns around upon the luckless peripatetic

[1] He justified Savage, because he thought him forsooth a nobleman, for not recording his obligations to Mrs. Oldfield's bounty.

(stroller) and demands, in a voice of thunder, how he dares to be a culprit, with the moral sentiments of Shakespeare nightly flowing from his lips? But if the reader will attentively peruse the CLII. sonnet of Shakespeare, and refer its subject to the feelings of some persons alive when he wrote it, he will see that he might turn in this way upon the great moral teacher himself, and ask how he dared to display unblemished purity to the admiration and study of the world?

He who like Shakespeare embraced the sum of life, and wrote in a manner little artificial and systematic, supplies not the formal, but the just demands of every occasion; he cannot, therefore, but abound in beauties both moral and descriptive: some of these, dragged from their proper places, become the favourites of the superficial, and pass as a common coin in conversation. They give an appearance of reading to idleness, and of taste to "coarse complexions." Their recitation is usually attended by a seeming rush of sensibility, and forms one of the grateful triumphs of affectation over the laborious and unlettered.

Even on the stage these beauties sometimes produce a ludicrous effect — ludicrous I mean from the disproportion as to the cause. That part of the audience which has had its taste formed by one of the popular selections, in the performance of a play is most attentive to what it best knows, the fine things extracted. A slight

whisper is heard in the house just before the admired passage is delivered, followed by immense applause when it is concluded. The actor, always disposed to refer this to himself, learns to humour this tendency in the audience by an awful preparation and more sonorous declamation. Let the reader remember the "baseless fabric" of Prospero, the "seven ages" of Jaques, "the quality of mercy" of Portia, the "patience on a monument" of Viola, and consider how false a delivery of them on the stage has resulted from the particular expectation thus excited.

But Heraclitus himself would laugh at the instance I am going to commemorate in "Othello." There is in this play a very civil, modest, silent gentlewoman, who is the wife of Othello's ensign, and who has the honour to attend upon the great captain's captain, the virtuous Desdemona. The Christian name of this lady (for by the baptismal name only either she or her husband is known through the play) is Emilia. Now, after this lady is once introduced to us in the acted play, she says nothing of the slightest moment, and does but one thing of any consequence, namely, to steal the handkerchief upon which her lady set so great a value. We look at the actress who personates this character, and soon find that she entertains a very different notion of its importance. Kept unwillingly in the background, longing to break forth and show the wonders of her voice

and the energy of her action, she contrives by outdressing her lady, and the aid of a rich plume of feathers, to do almost nothing through four tedious acts, but waves her promise to the spectators that, at last, their patience shall be repaid. The happy moment arrives; Othello throws off all reserve, abuses his wife in the grossest language, and leaves her as much amazed as grieved. Iago enters to comfort her. Then comes Emilia's turn, and forth she rushes to pronounce the following favourite morceau.

"*Emil.* I will be hanged, if some eternal villain,
Some busy and insinuating rogue,
Some cogging cozening slave, to get some office,
Have not devised this slander; I'll be hang'd else.
Iago. Fie, there is no such man; it is impossible.
Des. If any such there be, heaven pardon him!
Emil. A halter pardon him! and hell gnaw his bones!
Why should he call her ———; who keeps her company?
What time? what place? what form? what likelihood?
The Moor's abused by some outrageous knave,
Some base notorious knave, some scurvy fellow:
Oh, heaven, that such companions thou'dst unfold
And put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the rascal naked through the world!"

Here, taking her ground upon the virtuous indignation of the audience, the actress becomes a perfect fury; and, as if she waved the brand of Tisiphone, or rather the whip of the beadle, parades herself to the lamps in a semicircle, and speaks thunder to the gods themselves. Those

generous deities, scorning to be outdone in noise, send down a roar to "tear hell's concave." The actress in consequence has to boast through life how she used to get six rounds of applause in the part, and how she beat the gentle Desdemona (perhaps Mrs. Siddons) to a dead standstill by this overstrained and vulgar violence.[1]

Of late years it has been even worse; for measuring, I suppose, the efficacy of the chastisement by the vigour of the arm, if they have fortunately, in the company of either theatre, a lady of the heroic frame, "and more than common tall," she is always the representative of Emilia; and should any timid daughter of Melpomene make her début in the part of Desdemona, the amazon, like another Glumdalclitch, immediately assumes the care of her! — struts by her side, or overshadows her in the rear, until the proper moment arrives of stifling all her puny exertion as above, and the Moor succeeds to smother her altogether.

All this absurdity has made it apparent, to me at least, that the only proper corrector of natural but mischievous importance is some great actor, like Garrick, at the head of a theatre, — his judgment will be too sound to be disturbed, his author-

[1] That Shakespeare himself repressed, with all his might, the tendency to such display is obvious by the few words which close the speech:

"Even from the east to the west."

But the corrective, on the stage, is judiciously omitted.

ity too great to be resisted. The manager who is not an actor will seldom go into the minutiæ of the business, and if he delegate the task to one who is, the command is often resisted or sullenly obeyed. I have weighed the detriment to both author and actor, from the whole power of a theatre being in the hands of a man who may be both; I consider the many prejudices he may form, and one preference that he must entertain; but in my opinion, so much is gained by the unity in his operations, and the steady pressure of his interest, that I should ensure to a theatre so managed, on the whole, the best dramatic pieces and the best instructed performers.

The mimic stage has its realities, and death, so often repeated there in jest, happens once to all in earnest. The habits of some actors seem to put him constantly out of sight; but their course of life inevitably accelerates his approach. To none more truly than to the low comedian does the following passage apply:

> "Merely thou art Death's fool;
> For him thou labour'st by thy flight to shun,
> And yet run'st tow'rd him still."
>
> — *M. for M.* Act iii. Sc. 1.

Such is the reflection with which the historian of the stage feels himself called upon to record the death of Shuter, on the 1st of November, 1776.

"Upon such sacrifices the gods themselves drop incense,"

for poor Ned was indeed the delight of the galleries. His humour was broad and voluptuous, but never seemed richer than conviviality produces: the bottle was the sun of his table, and he neither had, nor sought, any higher inspiration. Yet he was an enthusiast in his worship, and enthusiasm led him into excess. Unthinking levity commonly borders on vice. Shuter, I have heard, added gaming to ebriety, and lost his money commonly soon after his wits. The supplies would frequently run low, and friends, however wanted, were not always at home. On such occasions the irregular son of merriment is apt to trust to the common refuge of the needy; but he kept up his spirits only to the forty-eighth year of his age, when they sunk for ever into that receptacle of humour, St. Paul's, Covent Garden. If the genius of its great architect ever revisits what he made the handsomest barn in Europe, long busied himself in masks, he may admit the actor willingly within its precincts; but the sometimes savage horrors of a Westminster election all good taste would proscribe from such a spot.

The habits of life are much altered since Shuter's time; the common tavern existence is now unknown. An eccentric, like Kean, for instance, may prefer the easy readiness of public entertainment to domestic enjoyment; but the coffee-houses are no longer crowded in the evening, they sink into tap-rooms, and are frequented only

by the lower orders. We are become more literary, and more scientific. We have reading-rooms everywhere, and lectures upon experimental philosophy. Gentlemen ambitious of such distinction are at home to the cultivators of art and science on certain evenings of the town season. The host displays his collection of magnificent works, with every convenience to consult them; his hospitality adds the suitable refreshments to the higher luxuries of taste. Men, of whatever pursuits, know where to meet others like themselves; and our Drydens and Addisons (such as they are) frequent no longer either Will's or Button's. But at certain conversaziones they are sure to be found, where the master of the house, at the door of his saloon, stands ready to offer his hand to every comer; and an ancient philosopher might have repeated the remark made as to the brazen statues at the gates of Rome:

> "Signa manus dextras ostendunt attenuari,
> Sæpe salutantatum tactu."
>
> — *Lucret.* B. i. v. 318.

The player, like other men, partakes of the purer manners of his age. The profession is for the most part rather above than below the middle standard. Still, perhaps, a little inflated by its rise in esteem, the actor proudly names the noble by whom he is countenanced; and, by the importance which he attaches to the connection,

shows that he considers it a courtesy rather than a right.

However, without elevating our players into the chair of the moralist, and looking upon them simply as the professors of an elegant art, every sound mind must rejoice that the old prejudice against the stage exists but in the region which originally put it down, the abode of fanaticism and rebellion.

We have already had occasion to notice, in the instance of Mrs. Siddons, the encouragement which the new manager did not give; we have now to look at that which they did, and we may dimly picture to ourselves some of the motives which might possibly interest the young and little scrupulous Sheridan. The late Mrs. Robinson had been educated by Hannah More. Her father, Captain Darby, had been unsuccessful in trade, and his misfortunes impaired his health; he died, and left his accomplished daughter totally without provision, beautiful as an angel, and as fond of poetry as Miss More herself. She had in the school displayed a striking tendency to the stage, and a lady who shared the education of Miss Darby there has often repeated to me the instances of her early love of acting.

Mr. Garrick, as she once told me, pointed out Cordelia to her as a trial part, and showed his lovely pupil what she would have to bear from his exquisite performance of Lear. But Mr. Robinson ended,

for a time at least, this serious design; the young attorney, passionately struck with her, —

> "Stept in with his receipt for making smiles,
> And blanching sables into bridal bloom."

But this only delayed the experiment, the match was every way unfortunate; in a little time they wanted the common comforts of life; and unfortunately indeed for them both, they wanted principle, by which such evils may always be surmounted or endured. Flattery soon withdrew the guards that reason had placed about beauty. He who should have commanded the garrison betrayed his trust — the husband made a sacrifice of his honour. Then establishments were soon seen, of which the means were invisible; the die was thrown that sealed the condition of the enchanting Maria, and she became in melancholy reality the Perdita. I am, however, here to remember that she made her first appearance on the 10th of December, 1776, at Drury Lane Theatre, in the character of Juliet. My father had known her from infancy, and on this occasion was induced to visit the theatre. He told me that the interest about her was of a melancholy cast, but that it resulted from the peculiar expression of her face, rather than the tones of her voice. He thought her languid and unimpassioned, and added, no doubt sincerely, that the pathos of Juliet had been felt only in Mrs. Cibber, with whom, he would enthusiastically maintain, no

"creature of earth's mould" could possibly be compared in Juliet and Monimia. He used, perhaps not unhappily, to call her the nightingale of the stage. When, some years afterward, I had the happiness to attend him to the performances of Mrs. Siddons, and remarked the melancholy tenderness of her voice, he said, I remember, "It must be powerful indeed, for I should have considered her form too dignified to allow of the sympathy which she excites. Cibber, sir, seemed to need and dispose of your tears from the delicacy of her frame."

I will not presume to suppose the person, who will be ever dear to me, biassed in these opinions; and he admired Mrs. Siddons to the full bent of younger followers in Isabella and Belvidera. He conceived her to be even sublime in Euphrasia, and the Zara of Congreve's tragedy. But I am now become myself an aged admirer, and must be careful to preserve the candour which I have ventured to applaud.

On the 14th of this month, a manufacture of some translation of Voltaire's tragedy, called "Semiramis," was presented to the public, already inducted into the purity of French feeling by Garrick's alteration of "Hamlet."[1] Perhaps the great actor's greatest fault originated from the

[1] If I should here again be told, on the authority of Doctor Moncey, a man who well knew Garrick, that "such were his awe and veneration for Shakespeare, he never could have, in the doc-

false and flippant absurdity by which Voltaire disgraced the preface to "Semiramis." Let us look a little into these irresistible temptations from the Frenchman, which even the veneration of Garrick for Shakespeare could not withstand. "Hamlet" is, it seems, on the whole, "une pièce grossière et barbare, qui ne serait pas supportée par la plus vile populace de la France et de l'Italie." But it may be reasonably inquired what there is in this unfortunate tragedy, which the patrons of Punch in France and Italy, and even the vilest, mark, of them, could not possibly endure. Hamlet goes mad in the second act, and his mistress in the third. "Hamlet y devient fou au second acte, et sa maîtresse devient folle au troisième." Now the first part of this assertion is false: Hamlet does not become mad in the second act, or in any act; though I once heard this gravely asserted by an actor, who, I much fear, carried his notion into his performance. One proof of this insanity, I remember, he even specified upon that occasion, namely, that Hamlet fancied himself counterfeiting madness, a delusion which he affirmed the mad were constantly falling into! Such meteors are hy-

tor's opinion, made the horrible mutilation of the poet's 'Hamlet' to which I have alluded," I then reply to this, and a former observation of a similar nature, that I have great respect for Doctor Moncey, but cannot allow any opinion of his, or the report of it, to weigh against fact and evidence. The alteration of the play still exists, and Mr. Garrick acted that alteration of the play the last time he performed the character.

potheses, originally started by eccentric minds, or in other words warm heads, and caught up as grounds of distinction and triumph over less subtle predecessors. To go on with M. de Voltaire. "Le Prince tue le père de sa maîtresse, feignant de tuer un rat." This is ignorance, the expression being purely metaphorical. Hamlet is neither mad, nor feigned madness in the queen's closet. Hearing some one exclaim for "help" behind the arras, and fancying, perhaps hoping, that it was the vile usurper, who was thus collecting evidence in secret, he runs at him with his rapier, and undesignedly puts Polonius to death. However, let Voltaire tell his own story, — he kills the father of his mistress, feigning to kill a rat, "et l'héroïne se jette dans la rivière." And the heroine throws herself into the river. — The heroine! Oh, this wretched flippancy, what "ignorant sins" does it not force these gay spirits to commit! Alas, the "fair Ophelia," the "dear maid," the "kind sister," the "most best," the "beatified Ophelia" is no heroine! She is no native of the French school, though her misery has been ridiculed by more than the vilest populace of France or of Italy. Neither does she throw herself into the river. But in a mild, an innocent, and fanciful delirium, she passes her time in weaving garlands of flowers, and strives to hang them upon the melancholy willow that grew aslant the brook. The bough to which she was clinging breaks under the weight of

the lovely enthusiast, and her trophies and herself are precipitated into the stream: there, insensible of her danger, she continues to chant the tender snatches of old hymns that memory, no longer under the control of reason, continued, from mere habit, to supply, till the song itself was drowned with the unfortunate musician! And we are to endure, under the title of refined taste, that a buffoon should thus travesty the creations of immortal genius.

But to proceed with Ophelia, or rather Voltaire. "On fait sa fosse sur le théâtre; des fossoyeurs disent des quolibets dignes d'eux, en tenant dans leurs mains des têtes de morts: le Prince Hamlet répond à leurs grossièretés abominables par des folies non moins dégoûtantes." They do make the grave of Ophelia upon the stage; and still make it there, because, however disgusting, perhaps terrible, the grave may be to the scoffer, Shakespeare has here rendered it the soil of infinite beauties; and, passing literally from grave to gay, he has made the gravedigger utter his rude and natural language, and the condescension of a prince, unknown to be so, reply to him in his own fashion. With respect to the skulls, so loathsome to our philosopher, they are equally so to Hamlet; but remember the important lesson which is suggested by that of Yorick, and wonder that any portion of our common nature could be cold to so much affectionate wisdom.

"*Ham.* Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times: and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge riseth at it. Here hung those lips, that I have kissed, I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that."

Our critic continues his detail. "Pendant ce temps-là, un des acteurs fait la conquête de la Pologne." This is not true, it is only a frontier garrisoned town, and might be taken by assault in a few hours. But with a happy remembrance of the French *fête des rois*, his indignation is roused at the scandalous indecency of royal persons drinking upon the stage. "Hamlet, sa mère, et son beau-père boivent ensemble" (drink together) "sur le théâtre"—like porters meeting at the door of a cabaret. The reader knows to what this alludes, and his knowledge of ancient customs will furnish him with numberless instances of the cup of wine passing, as much from ceremony as refreshment, among the great of former ages. "On chante à table, on s'y querelle, on se bat, on se tue." They (I suppose the parties who have been drinking together) sing at table, they quarrel (fall out in their cups), fight, and kill each other. This is total misrepresentation. However, we must not

omit the elegant summary with which the criticism is wound up. "On croirait que cet ouvrage est le fruit de l'imagination d'un sauvage ivre." One would think this work proceeded only from the imagination of a drunken savage. I must, however, respectfully insinuate that the sovereigns of France, even in modern times, dined publicly among their courtiers, and the Théâtre Français, either with respect to its customs or its language, never had any other model than the court of Louis the Fourteenth.

To the Ghost, however, our philosophic poet is even complimentary. "L'ombre du père d'Hamlet est un des coups de théâtre les plus frappants. Il fait toujours un grand effet sur les Anglais" (and mark his address); "je dis sur ceux qui sont le plus instruits, et qui sentent le mieux toute l'irrégularité de leur ancien théâtre." How dexterously he compliments the "right hand file," whom the inferior genius of his nation had corrupted, and who, in spite of their perfect feeling of the eccentricity of the "drunken savage," were yet alive to the trembling prejudices of infancy, and spellbound by the awful charms of the great magician! I am afraid among these English *le plus instruits*, he numbered Pope and Bolingbroke and Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, and, looking to the tragedy of "Cato," so studiously avoiding Shakespeare, to the great Addison himself.

But in his "Semiramis," Voltaire has a ghost

of a very extraordinary kind indeed. He is no visitant by moonlight, who is condemned in the daytime to fast in fires; from the bosom of his own monument he advances, in the broad glare of the sun, and once more annoys the drawing-room of Semiramis. We will just examine the language in which the terrors of the court and the oracular pleasure of the shade are expressed, by one who affected to pity the bad taste of Shakespeare. Perhaps even through the commonplace terms used by Voltaire on this occasion it may be obvious that he remembered his master, and saw how hopeless the task was which he had undertaken.

" SEMIRAMIS.

Le ciel tonne sur nous; est-ce faveur ou haine?[1]
Grâce, dieux tout-puissants![2] qu'Arsace me l'obtienne.
Quels funèbres accents redoublent mes terreurs?
La tombe s'est ouverte: il paraît — Ciel! je meurs.
[*Here the ghost of Ninus quits the tomb.*]

ASSUR.

L'ombre de Ninus même! ô dieux! est-il possible?

ARZACE.

Eh bien![3] qu'ordonnes-tu? parle-nous, dieu terrible.

[1] Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell;
Be thy intents wicked or charitable.

[2] Angels, and ministers of grace, defend us.

[3] Say, why is this? wherefore? what shall we do?
Speak to me. Stay and speak.

ASSUR.

Parle.

SEMIRAMIS.

Veux-tu me perdre? ou veux-tu pardonner?
C'est ton sceptre et ton lit que je viens de donner;
Juge si ce héros est digne de ta place.
Prononce: j'y consens.

L'OMBRE, À ARZACE.

Tu régneras, Arzace:
Mais il est des forfaits que dois expier
Dans ma tombe, à ma cendre il faut sacrifier.
Sers et mon fils et moi; souviens-toi de ton père:
Écoute le pontife.

ARZACE.

Ombre que je révère,
Demi-dieu dont l'esprit anime ces climats,
Ton aspect m'encourage et ne m'étonne pas.
Oui, j'irai dans ta tombe au péril de ma vie.
Achève; que veux-tu que ma main sacrifie?
[*The ghost returns to the door of the tomb.*]
Il s'éloigne, il nous fuit![1]

SEMIRAMIS.

Ombre de mon époux,
Permets qu'en ce tombeau j'embrasse tes genoux,
Que mes regrets —

L'OMBRE, *à la porte.*

Arrête, et respecte ma cendre;
Quand il en sera temps, je t'y ferai descendre."

[1] 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

In the latter part of the scene he has not disdained to consult the page of "Julius Cæsar," in which his shade appears to Brutus.

On this extravagant, useless, unintelligible piece of mystification, where nothing is revealed, and the spectre merely mows and chatters, and then bites the people whom he haunts, like the goblins set upon another drunken savage, Caliban, I wish to do no more than place its trash by the side of Shakespeare. As to the moderate and modern request of Semiramis, "Permit me, in your tomb, to embrace your knees," I must in candour remark that, the scene lying in Babylon, the supplication was not so utterly ridiculous as it might sound. The practice of embalming happily prepared the royal relics for such excursions; the extravagant and erring spirit had only to repair again to its mortal, but not dissevered structure, and march out the mummy itself in the splendid apparatus of the tomb. The wisdom of the Egyptians and their taste somewhat encumbered the world I confess; and they peopled their edifices as much by the dead as the living. Yet the importance thus attached to their progenitors by the Egyptians, as well as the American Indians, may be received as more than a mark of self-love; and the rites of those nations would never have been offered to the body if an immortal hope had not suggested to the son that they might somehow be grateful to the liberated spirit of the sire.

As to Captain Ayscough's tragedy, which originated the above remarks, I remember once to have read it, and at least applauded the discretion with

which he presented the ghost of Ninus only to his widow and his son. But he was a feeble writer, a man of fashion, who hankered after literary fame, and did some little service by editing the miscellaneous works of his uncle, Lord Lyttelton.

On the 19th of March, 1776, Barry and his wife, as I have already observed, acted for the benefit of Woodward. Old Bannister, who was "nothing if not mimical," played Jaques once in imitation of Barry, then near his close; for on the 11th of January, 1777, he died at his house in Norfolk Street, and was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey on the 20th. Barry and Mossop and Sheridan had the honour, in their narrow range, to dispute some of the great parts in tragedy with Mr. Garrick. Upon Sheridan I can feel no difficulty to pronounce. I have heard him declaim in various composition, and can be quite sure that, whatever opinion might attach to him as an accurate, a sensible, and a very manly actor, his voice was too harsh, and his expression too dull, to allow of any near approach to the most brilliant actor that perhaps ever lived. Barry, as one of the finest and most elegant figures that existed, with a voice that was usually styled the voice of love, might, in the Jaffiers and Romeos of the stage, sometimes leave the female breast in some little or even in no doubt as to the preference between them. The sons of Erin I believe never

thought that Spranger Barry could have a superior. In Othello he stood alone.

I have heard that his lovely wife had by no means the happiest temper in the world; but he left her, notwithstanding, all that he had to leave; and I shall here record a copy of his will in her favour, which I do not know to have been previously published, as it is short, and shows his circumstances at the close of life.

(COPY.)

"I, Spranger Barry, of King Street, in the parish of Saint Paul, Covent Garden, Esquire, do make this my last will and testament, as follows — I give, devise, and bequeath to my wife Ann Barry, formerly Ann Dancer, her executors, administrators, and assigns, my house, held by lease for fifty years, at Stretham in Surry, with all the furniture belonging to the same — And also the Theatre Royal in Crow Street, Dublin, with the dwelling-house adjoining to it, and the ground near thereto, now unlet, together with the wardrobe, scenes, furniture and other things belonging to the said theatre, or appertaining thereto, with its rights, members, privileges and appurtenances, and all my right, title, interest, property and claim in and to the same and every part thereof. To have and to hold the said messuage, theatre and premises, with the appurtenances, unto the said Ann Barry, her heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, to the only proper use and behalf of the said Ann Barry, her heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, for ever; subject nevertheless, to the payment of two several annuities of sixty pounds and forty pounds to James Carter, during the respective lives of Ann Carter and Julia Carter, and charged upon the said premises

by indenture, bearing date the twenty-third day of April, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-eight, for the purpose therein mentioned. All the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate and effects whatsoever and wheresoever, real and personal, I give, devise, and bequeath unto the said Ann Barry, her heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns. And I make, constitute, and appoint her, the said Ann Barry, to be sole executor (*sic*) of this my will, and hereby revoking all other wills by me made, I declare this to be my last will and testament. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this twenty-fourth day of January one thousand seven hundred and seventy.

"SPRANGER BARRY. [L. S.]

"Signed, sealed, published, and declared, by the said Spranger Barry, as and for his last will and testament, in the presence of us, who, in his presence, at his request. and in the presence of each other, have set our names as witnesses to the execution hereof.

"DAVID RICHARDS.

"ALBANY WALLIS (almost the legal guardian of actors).

"HARRY BURT, Clerk to Mr. Wallis."

The reader might indeed complain if, after showing how he disposed of his property, I declined to record how his friend and countryman, Murphy, disposed of his merits as an actor:

"Harmonious Barry! with what varied art
His grief, rage, tenderness assail'd the heart!
Of plaintive Otway now no more the boast!
And Shakespeare grieves for his Othello lost.
Oft on this spot the tuneful Swan expir'd,
Warbling his grief; you listen'd and admir'd.
'Twas then but fancied woe; now every Muse,
Her lyre unstrung, with tears his urn bedews."

On the 1st of February, 1777, a tragedy was acted at Covent Garden Theatre, called "Sir Thomas Overbury." That, at all events, unfortunate man, Savage, with a perseverance that indicated very limited powers for the drama, had written a second tragedy on this his favourite subject. Cave bought it, and it was touched upon by Garrick and Colman and William Woodfall. I think it was not quite peculiar to Savage, though he would be more indignant than other men at the practice, that there was supposed to exist some stage mystery, in which only certain persons were initiated; and accordingly it was suggested to Savage that he ought to put his play into the hands of Thomson and Mallet to be made fit for representation: as if Savage, a man who had led a town life, and had some power even as an actor, wanted any stage knowledge that Thomson or Mallet could supply! But thus even the genius of the unfortunate is constantly insulted, and a play that does not tread the beaten track is driven from the course, or broke in to the required sameness by the empiricism of a manager's advisers. This has produced among us, of late years, an invariable *coup de théâtre* in the last act of all serious dramas, — a castle must be besieged, a mine must be sprung, and the spectators must be dazzled, and stunned, and suffocated, for effect. The passion of Love has much to answer, as engrossing the great bulk of our drama, and compelling catas-

trophes that differ only as to happiness or misery, death or marriage; but the image of War has taken its turn to reign, — our triumphs of late as a great military power have crowded our stages with regular armies (not prompter's troops), bands from the parade, and banners which surpass the long unequalled cognisances of the lord mayor's show.

In Savage we have been considering a man far from amiable, whom modern discoveries affirm even to have been an impostor, but to whom some weight attaches from his connection with Doctor Johnson, and must for ever attach, in consequence of a biography, written in the feelings of friendship, but with the spirit of moral wisdom.

On the 3d of February died Hugh Kelly, a dramatist of slender power, a man of humble and modest diligence. He had dared to write in support of government, and when, in the stormy days of Wilkes and Junius, he addressed his "Word to the Wise" from the stage, a faction damned it on its first appearance. His widow and children now derived assistance from this sentenced play, which Doctor Johnson, another Hercules, restored, like Alcestis, from the shades. He wrote a prologue, in his mildest tone, yet full of moral dignity and beauty:

> "Where aught of bright or fair the piece displays,
> Approve it only — 'tis too late to praise.
> If want of skill or want of care appear,
> Forbear to hiss — the poet cannot hear.

By all like him must praise and blame be found
At best a fleeting gleam, or empty sound."

But excelling this infinitely is the close, in which he announces the triumph of benevolence:

"Yet then shall calm reflection bless the night,
When liberal pity dignify'd delight;
When Pleasure fired her torch at Virtue's flame,
And Mirth was bounty with an humbler name."

Pope, by infinite pains, elaborated his composition into verse like this: the early and continued discipline of Johnson's mind, I persuade myself, made him flow, without present labour, in such correct and perfect expression.

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ONTARIO

CHAPTER IV.

THE author suits his own convenience in the distribution of his work into chapters. Were he to consider time, I mean so much of it as constitutes a season, as the measure of a chapter, the division must be long or short with the importance of its events. When, therefore, any subjects claim very particular consideration, the reader may not regret that what would otherwise branch out too far is divided, and that two chapters may pass between the winter and the summer of any given year.

On the 22d of February, 1777, Arthur Murphy produced at Covent Garden Theatre his admirable comedy of "Know Your Own Mind," a play written with, I think, more care than he commonly bestowed, the dialogue being much more pointed, the consequence probably of frequent revision, and possessing much of that charm which Vanbrugh taught in his comedies, — language easy to be spoken. However, often as he might revise his work, he has repeated a phrase, and that, unfortunately for his taste, a vulgarism, in two pages exactly opposite to each other, and both

from the mouth of the same speaker, and his wit moreover, Dashwood. The reader will find them in the printed collection of Murphy's works, Vol. iv., pp. 22, 23. "Up to his eyes Sir Richard was in love with her;" and of Millamour also, "Up to the eyes in love with Lady Bell." There was a good deal of coquetry at times about Murphy, — "he had productions by him, but who were to act them?" "Know Your Own Mind" had been kept even longer than Horace requires, as the author assures us in his prologue. This I fancy is not to be understood as to its integrity, but that he had retained a play upon the subject ten years in his possession. I make this remark because I incline to think Foote's Lady Kitty Crocodile the original of Murphy's Mrs. Bromley. The names of Murphy's comedy are for the most part significant or characteristic. We have Millamour, Dashwood, Malvil, Lovewit, and so on, but his very unamiable widow, as if to banish all idea of the Crocodile, is called, very insignificantly, Mrs. Bromley. Yet it is beyond all measure strange that what was, I have no doubt, designed to conceal the plagiarism, absolutely reveals it, and this name is found in a speech of Lady Kitty, who thus insults her protégée, Miss Lydall: "There was your mother; did not I, by my own single interest, get her into the almshouse at Bromley?"

Foote was ready with this piece in the year 1776. It seems nearly incredible that any woman

of rank should obtain an injunction, on the plea that Lady Kitty was a libel, and personal to herself. Did the Duchess of Kingston imagine that she monopolised all simulated affection for the dead, and the tyranny of patronage for the living? Foote at table, to be sure, might be more explicit than upon paper, and by mimicry leave no doubt at whom he was driving. But on the stage, who would think of appropriating vices so common?

> "Who can come in, and say that I mean her?
> When such a one as she, such is her neighbour."
> —*As You Like It.*

As the "Trip to Calais" was not printed until Colman, in 1778, started it, much augmented, as the "Capuchin," Murphy derived his acquaintance with Lady Kitty from Foote's convivial display of her ladyship at table, — a mode of entertainment peculiar to himself, but which Doctor Johnson pronounced to be irresistible.

To return more particularly to "Know Your Own Mind:" Murphy after his long delay was at last unfortunate; for Woodward, who had hoped to close his stage career brilliantly in Dashwood, was seized about this time with the illness of which he died, and had, instead of the mimic, his mortal career to attend to.

It was once reported of Shakespeare, "that he was obliged to kill Mercutio in the third act, lest he should have been killed by him." Dryden

thought it no such difficulty to sustain him through five acts. Murphy has, in my opinion, performed a higher task in maintaining the fire of Dashwood in undiminished brightness to the end.

In my time we have never possessed more than half of a stage representative for him. King could have keenly and neatly spoken his sarcasms, but he never could look as if he enjoyed them. Lewis, a little restrained, might have exhibited much of his untiring hilarity and boundless satire; but Lewis could never utter a pointed sentence intelligibly. Lee Lewes was always vulgar, and, with a bad manner of utterance, was obviously below the conception of thought and expression equally refined and amusing. He spoke, odd as the comparision may be thought, as a man walks who has a wooden leg, and every second word stumped upon the ear. This he caught, and, except the action of harlequin, it was all he did catch from Woodward.

By one single trick, the screen in the "School for Scandal," besides that he had the power of management to aid him, Sheridan threw Murphy from his supremacy. The point, the invention, the facility of Murphy in "Know Your Own Mind" are astonishing. Sheridan wrote with amazing difficulty, and as to what he borrowed, with great effrontery. The "School for Scandal" and the "Critic" both attest the great use Sheridan made of his predecessor. Perhaps I may be

permitted a few proofs of what I have commended in Murphy. The politician who knots his motions on his handkerchief, — "And so on he goes, till his handkerchief is twisted into questions of state; the liberties and fortunes of all posterity dangling like a bede-roll; he puts it in his pocket, drives to the gaming-table, — the next morning his handkerchief goes to the wash, and his country and the minority are both left in the suds."

Nor is his female quidnunc less entertaining. Mrs. Macaulay sure herself. "She is a politician in petticoats; a fierce republican; she talks of the dagger of Brutus while she settles a pin in her tucker; and says more about ship-money than pin-money."

How sparkling and unaffected what follows!

"MILLAMOUR.

When pleasantry is out of all time and place —

DASHWOOD.

Why then I shall be tired of all time and place."

Again soon after, —

"MALVIL.

I — I — I am apt to carry my heart at my tongue's end."

DASHWOOD.

I knew his heart was not in the right place."

With similar readiness also, —

"BYGROVE.

Take my advice, and don't lose your friend for your joke.

DASHWOOD.

By no means — except now and then when the friend is the worst of the two."

Murphy's scholarship was considerable; he has written largely in Latin verse, and cultivated it like his friend Doctor Johnson, through life. When I estimate his various powers, his conversation, his high-toned manners, and see all that he achieved as to fortune, I am ready to burst out in one of the exclamations of "Know Your Own Mind:"

"Show a man of letters to the first of your nobility, and they will leave him to starve in a garret. Introduce a fellow who can sing a catch (sometimes only catch a tune), write a dull political pamphlet, or play off fireworks, and he shall pass six months in the country, by invitation."

Whatever constituted an exception to this ungenerous and silly neglect? The passion of some lady for literary distinction, the desire to display her own acquisitions, and to extend them. Such a one will surround her husband's table with those who alone can be its ornaments. Such was the taste of Mrs. Thrale; and Streatham only could display together, of all our mansions of either rank or opulence, the members and the portraits of the literary club.

I have spoken of the representative of Dashwood. The other characters, with two exceptions, shared his fate. Lewis, as far as his powers could represent Millamour's fickleness, by his gaiety only injured Dashwood. The ladies of the stage were rather below the par of politeness, with the exception of Mrs. Hartley, who, in all her golden beauty, acted the lovely interest of Miss Neville. The author could not have wished a more perfect face and form than this lady displayed upon the stage. When I look back, and around me, for anything to reflect her to those who have never seen her, I am obliged to say that the exquisite portrait by Sir Joshua did not do her entire justice, and that at last we must refer to the images of ripened beauty and modest dignity, with which the perhaps flattering fancies of her poets delighted to exhibit the person of the Virgin Queen.

Burgoyne, when he conceived the plan of the Alscrip family, under the name of Alton, led Miss Neville into a second martyrdom, and, like Murphy, found a beautiful representative of her in Mrs. Crouch; not that I can be of opinion the latter, by her fondest admirers, was ever compared in loveliness with Mrs. Hartley. However, her effect in "The Heiress" will not speedily be forgotten, and she had to sustain the brilliant expression of Miss Farren in "Lady Emily."

In this comedy of "Know Your Own Mind,"

the female glitter was thrown into the character of Lady Bell, then acted by Mrs. Mattocks. With every allowance for time, and the manners descending to parts below refinement, Mrs. Mattocks was not the representative of elegance and beauty. She spoke, however, with great point and vivacity, force, and meaning. I have seen her Lady Racket with much pleasure.

Woodward, as I have already stated, declined all new study, and considered his professional career as closed; however, he had promised to act on the 17th of March, for the benefit of the widow Barry, that his last performance might be an act of friendship; but his complaint had taken too strong a hold, and he was compelled to resign Sir Andrew and his accomplishments to little Quick, who always succeeded in producing merriment, though Sir Andrew was completely out of his range. In the comedy of "Twelfth Night," Woodward always sustained Sir Andrew Aguecheek with infinite drollery, assisted by that expression of rueful dismay which gave so peculiar a zest to his Marplot. In the latter character I have always understood that he wore "this rue for a difference" between himself and Garrick, who, it has been said, on high critical authority, was not quite at home in Marplot. Great efforts were made in the circle of his humble friends to force this performance to a rivalry with Woodward; but the "son of whim" remained unshaken. His unap-

peasable curiosity, slow comprehension, and annihilation under the sense of his dilemmas were so diverting, that even the great master soon dropped the contest, and left him the decided Marplot of the stage.

Woodward lived only a month after the benefit of Mrs. Barry, for he died at his house in Chapel Street, Grosvenor Place, on Thursday, the 17th of April, 1777. He was in his sixty-third year, having been born on the 2d of October, 1714. In the year 1728, when the "Beggar's Opera" was acted by Lilliputians, Harry Woodward performed the Beggar, Mrs. Vincent, then Miss Binks, being Macheath on that occasion; so early did the humour appear for indecent travesty in this piece, brought out only the year before at Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was soon after his study of these beggarly elements of the profession, that he became in due form Rich's apprentice, who taught him all that he knew of pantomime; and Woodward had cultivated the arts of writing, and was rather fond of controversy. I believe him to have been commonly right, though the press is a public medium of display which I should always exhort the actor most strenuously to avoid.

Woodward had been careful beyond the measure of the comedian, and died in remarkably good circumstances. Mrs. Bellamy had resided *en amie* with him during the last ten years of his life, and benefited considerably in the disposition of his

property. This excellent comedian was buried at St. George's, Hanover Square. Lee Lewes, in default of a better, had destined himself some way to succeed Woodward; and Sheridan, to whom everybody now turned as the rising muse, honoured his benefit with a few lines, which he spoke, in the character of Harlequin, to the memory of Woodward.

"But hence with tragic strains, unless to mourn
That Lun and Marplot here shall ne'er return;
That comic muse, who still with anxious pride
The claim of motley Pantomime denied,
Now humbly hangs o'er Woodward's recent bier,
Sees the fantastic mimic mourner there,
Yet deigns to join in grief, and sheds a kindred tear."

In reference to an art which hurries faster than any other into oblivion I snatch with pride every votive garland of poetic flowers, and bid them, I hope not vainly, to bloom a little longer over departed genius.

When Mrs. Siddons quitted Drury Lane Theatre, at the end of her first season, the new management had come into full vigour, and it may be presumed that Sheridan looked only for supporters to the comic muse: he was then rifling, or, as he feared, spoiling Vanbrugh's "Relapse," and successfully composing his "School for Scandal," on which his dramatic fame rests, and may rest securely. But whether he was actually blind, or partial, or indifferent, one gentleman, no mean

judge of his profession, immediately engaged Mrs. Siddons for his theatre at Birmingham. There, under the management of Richard Yates, she acted the first business, and it was at Birmingham, in the summer of 1776, that Henderson first saw our greatest actress. He was immediately struck with her excellence, and pronounced that she would never be surpassed. He did more than this: he wrote directly to Palmer, the Bath manager, to advise an engagement of her without delay, as of the utmost importance to his concern; but her cast of characters being at that time consigned by article to another lady, he could not immediately attend to Henderson's advice, which, however, did not sleep in his ear, for at Bath Mrs. Siddons nourished a fame in her art and a fashionable connection that together in a few years brought her to the metropolis in triumph.

The "Trip to Scarborough" is a purification of Vanbrugh's "Relapse." The incident which gives name to the latter is the return to a life of gallantry, upon coming from the matrimonial felicity of retirement in the country. Sheridan has very properly cut away all the mawkish colloquies between Loveless and his Amanda, written in a very unusual style, half blank verse, half prose. But when he ventured to save the virtue of Berinthia from the moonlight closet and the sofa, to which she is borne away by Loveless without a struggle, and even without a noise, —

when she only trifles with him, to pique Townley, and Loveless, master of a present opportunity, lets the fair trifler escape for a promised meeting afterward in the garden, all the brilliant language in the world could not atone for so flat an expedient. Not that Sheridan tried the experiment, for what he has written is beneath him.

The infamous male coupler becomes a female of the same name. The age that could endure the allusions in Vanbrugh's scenes must have been lost to all sense of decency. In the exquisite diction of Mr. Gibbon, "I touch with reluctance, and dispatch with impatience, that odious vice, of which modesty rejects the name, and nature abominates the idea."

Among the omissions of dialogue merely, there is not much to be regretted. I think, however, Foppington might have retained at Scarborough the ingenious display of his temperament in love.

"*Lord Fop.* Why, my heart in my amours is like my heart out of my amours, — *à la glace.* My body, Tam, is a watch; and my heart is the pendulum to it; whilst the finger runs round to every hour in the circle, that still beats the same time."

Perhaps imitated by Cowper as to reading the voyages of circumnavigators, —

> "While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
> Runs the great circle and is still at home."
>
> — *Task.*

Sheridan wrote about a page of very poor stuff to bring in the fiddlers at the close and make a dancer of Sir Tunbelly, and his Berinthia, Mrs. Yates, dropped her curtesy after saying, "While the intention is evidently to please, British auditors will ever be indulgent to the errors of the performance." He had little variety certainly on such occasions, for his "Duenna" ends with the same thought:

> "For generous guests like these
> Accept the wish to please."

But I hasten to the appearance of the "School for Scandal."

I think it of importance to preserve the original cast of this comedy. The cast implies the author's ideas of his characters. The characters, rightly understood, will help a future age to estimate the powers of the actors. Why am I not as well able to convey the perfect impression of their performance?

Sir Peter Teazle	Mr. King.
Sir Oliver Surface	Mr. Yates.
Joseph Surface	Mr. Palmer.
Charles Surface	Mr. Smith.
Crabtree	Mr. Parsons.
Sir Benjamin Backbite . . .	Mr. Dodd.
Rowley	Mr. Aickin.
Moses	Mr. Baddeley.
Trip	Mr. Lamash.
Snake	Mr. Packer.

Careless	Mr. Farren.
Sir Harry Bumper . . .	Mr. Gawdry.
Lady Teazle	Mrs. Abington.
Maria	Miss P. Hopkins.
Lady Sneerwell	Miss Sherry.
Mrs. Candour	Miss Pope.

As Sheridan had built himself upon Congreve as to dialogue, so it was quite clear that, while composing, he meditated deeply how his thoughts were to be uttered, and his company fortunately possessed every variety of elocution. I think his comedy was better spoken in all its parts than any play that I have witnessed upon the stage. And I can safely add that, as to the acting of it, every change, to the present hour, has been a sensible diminution of the original effect. The lingered sentiment of Palmer, the jovial smartness of Smith, the caustic shyness of King, the brilliant loquacity of Abington, however congenial to the play, have long been silent. But as our ancient monasteries at the revival of letters, when they obtained some fair and perfect manuscript of a great work, allowed surrounding foundations the advantage of a copy, and this copy again, in its turn, became an original to others; so the first actors of the "School for Scandal" were imitated throughout the country, and some portion of their excellence, by frequent transmission, must reach a distant age. And as in regard to those precious

remains of antiquity to which I have compared them, some errors from hurry, from inferior knowledge, from misconception, have crept into the successive copies; so the clear and perfect style of the school of Garrick may be invaded by folly, and sullied by fancied improvement. Sheridan himself attended rehearsals, and fully approved the first exhibitors, — an advantage which should stamp the highest value upon their performance, and leave it, if possible, secure from innovation. Where men, from want of skill, fail to imitate perfectly, let it be remembered that supplements in a different taste will never compensate the deficiency.

Murphy could not be expected to rival the effect of the "School for Scandal," with whatever dexterity he had built upon the ground of Destouches. His interest was weaker, and his work afforded none of those pictures to the eye which are so essential to the drama. The cast of "Know Your Own Mind," also, bore no comparison with that of the "School for Scandal." It was creditable to Murphy to make the stand he did at Covent Garden. The season there was otherwise undistinguished, and presented the routine of common business. However, they secured some good nights by a performance of Mason's dramatic poem of "Caractacus." Clarke, who was anything but first-rate, was the representative of the Briton king, and the beauty of Mrs. Hartley was a more

powerful charm than any rites among the mysteries of Mona.

I am now to speak of one of those peculiar beings whom nature graces by some charm scarcely definable, — by which all, however, are equally fascinated, and which they are destined to see pass away never to be replaced. I allude to the famous Miss Catley, the Syren, the Euphrosyne, the Juno, and, this season, the Mandane of Doctor Arne's "Artaxerxes." Catley had a very brilliant and voluble execution, and she therefore executed the airs of Mandane, if not in the Italian taste, with great neatness and powerful effect. As to her person and countenance, she certainly had no striking characteristics of Mandane. Leoni was her Arbaces, whose falsetto had unrivalled sweetness, and Reinhold, a fine manly singer and excellent musician, performed Artabanes.

"Comus" was always a favourite afterpiece with the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, — Catley, in Euphrosyne, was a bacchante of the first order; and the song of "Sweet Echo" was added to her business, which Leoni in his falsetto echoed surprisingly. "The Golden Pippin," she immortalised by her Juno; "The Jovial Crew," a worn-out pleasantry of a former age, revived in her Rachel; and the ballad opera existed in her attraction. To those who have never heard Miss Catley, I must, as my manner is, try to give some notion of what was peculiar to her. It was the

singing of unequalled animal spirits, it was Mrs. Jordan's comedy carried into music, — the something more, that a duller soul cannot conceive, and a feebler nerve dare not venture. Even at the close of her theatric life, when consumptive, and but the ghost of her former self, gasping even for breath, and wasting her little remaining vitality in her exertion, she would make sometimes a successful attempt at one of her former brilliant rushes of musical expression, and mingle a pleasing astonishment along with the pain you were compelled to suffer. No other female singer ever gave the slightest notion of her. She was bold, volatile, audacious; mistress of herself, of her talent, and her audience. Saville Carey I have heard sometimes touch her manner feebly, in the famous triumph of her hilarity, "Push about the Jorum." But some conception of her brilliant impetuous style may be formed by those who have been so happy as to hear Ambrogetti sing the not less famous "Fin ch'an dal vino," in the masterwork of Mozart, "Don Giovanni." Voice he had little, but he had articulation and rapidity that seldom are found together, — his close shake before returning upon the subject, and seeming ease, though so exhausted as he must have been, all remind me of his predecessor of a different school, nation, and sex; and Catley, if at all conceivable by the present age, will be only found in Ambrogetti.

I would not be misconceived to intend any preference of the singers of a former day over the present vocalists. The style of our music is changed: our composers of the day rival their Italian or German brethren in all the intricacies of the science. What the Germans have done for letters they have done for music also: they have matured the nursery, and written seriously of hobgoblins; the stage accordingly teems with hellish fiends, and their music imitates the wild actions of perverted beings. Composition has dispensed with all subject, and airs seem constructed of a series of unconnected flights, lengthened into absurdity by a cadence of chromatic divisions, ending with a vaulting of no meaning, and an abrupt descent upon the key-note. The singer, however, makes his exit in triumph, and fortunes are made by the music and the execution of it. Our ears are, as it were, punished for their pains; we are disgraced while we are riveted to the spot. Yet powerful nature sometimes throws off the mountains of absurdity heaped upon her, and in some pathetic or rustic strain by Stephens or Tree, Braham (though rare) or Sinclair, asserts her right to the simple endowments of her youth. The force of fashion, the appetite for novelty, the silly aspiration to resemble the nations on the Continent, soon, however, carry us into the rage, whatever it be, and we have recently been almost in doubt whether Mozart himself must

not fall before the "free shot" of Carl Maria Von Weber. Amidst extravagance, poor common sense, like Cordelia in "King Lear," indulges its hearted genuine affection and is silent.

The Haymarket Theatre, now the property of Mr. Colman, opened on the 30th of May, and Foote acted his usual characters in the "Nabob" and the "Devil on Two Sticks." But the new manager had made very great efforts to secure a company of sterling merit. Miss Barsanti had returned from Ireland much improved. Miss Farren, with very high provincial reputation, bore her name at once into the bills of the day, and acted Miss Hardcastle in "She Stoops to Conquer" on the 9th of June. She was even then greatly admired, and it was obvious that her lovely expression, her intelligence, and the air of fashion about her would, at no very distant period, place her in the seat of Mrs. Abington, whenever she should retire. Here, therefore, the little manager possessed himself of a treasure essential to the style of his summer amusement, an actress able to divide the palm of genteel comedy with the elder Palmer. After the comedy, Edwin, in Midas, convulsed the house with laughter as usual. Perhaps Edwin, like Liston, never was fully enjoyed except in a small theatre.

Two nights after Miss Farren's first appearance — long desired and amply gratifying expectation — Henderson performed in London, after being for

some seasons the Roscius of Bath. I have recently perused his correspondence on the subject of engaging with Mr. Garrick. One or two trial parts, and then coming under the management of that great actor, to do whatever should be assigned, would certainly have ruined him. It for a time did ruin Mrs. Siddons, who, like himself, was too precious for "nature's sale work," and could only be worthy attention in the highest place. Henderson came to Colman's on this stipulation; he arrived as another jubilee for Shakespeare, and the poet lived in the actor in the plenitude of both his serious and his comic power. Henderson, I think, wisely took Shylock for the opening part. Macklin, during the preceding winter, had often performed it at Covent Garden. But the conception of Henderson was quite original. He could be, when he chose it, the most accurate of mimics; but, as he told me, it cost him infinite trouble to lay aside the hold that Garrick's manner had taken of him. Macklin he probably had seen, for I reckon the story of the veteran's remark to be one of those pure fictions which are made because they are pointed sentences, and believed because they are probable. Had Henderson seen Macklin, he could not but differ from him. In taste, in feeling, in accurate reading, as well as the superior vigour of his frame, he must have exhibited the greatest distinction. His scene with Tubal was perfectly astonishing. He set out in

the play with a reading which I should recommend for effect to the actor, but carefully keep from the text of Shakespeare. The reader remembers the Jew's address to Antonio :

> " Signor Antonio, many a time and oft,
> On the Rialto you have rated me
> About my monies, and my usances."

The compound adverb " many-a-time-and-oft " is one of those clustered pleonasms which have passed unquestioned into common speech ; absurd enough, like the aldermanic toast, " a speedy peace and soon ; " but it was the phraseology of Shakespeare, and should never be suspected of corruption. Henderson divided it for the sake of strengthening his impression, " Many a time " (as if he had implied many places), " and oft on the Rialto ! " (the place where merchants most do congregate, and therefore that where his vituperation would be most injurious) " you have rated me." I persuade myself that Shakespeare, with our present feeling of the value of character upon the Royal Exchange, would have thanked an actor for a discrimination so emphatic and judicious. From the first Henderson became a school, in which the young student might learn to think, and to feel also, if nature had endowed him with the requisite sensibility. By sensibility I do not mean that childish affection which the general notion of distress of any kind sometimes com-

pels a performer to display, to the palpable injury of his own art; but that quick feeling at the hour of study, which sympathises with the character he develops, and is a sure guide to the mimic emotions, as to their place, their kind, and their duration. A great actor on the scene displays all this, not because he must be moved, but because he ought to seem so; not because he cannot restrain emotion, but because he commands it. The whole then is deception, and his art would be imperfect if all his feelings were not under absolute control. Henderson frequently repeated his Shylock, and Miss Barsanti was the Portia through the season.

But Shylock, however animated, called upon Henderson for a small portion of his great talents, and he followed that character by Hamlet, in which he made an impression of still greater value. We have been gradually taking away from Shakespeare much that is characteristic of him and of nature. I mean the mixture of gay and comic images with tragic character; by omitting which the latter is rendered false as the representative of humanity, and the prodigy of unvaried woe is demanded on the stage, though it probably never existed in any considerable portion of life, even passed in a prison. We know that Cervantes wrote the first part of "Don Quixote" in a state of poverty and confinement. Now here is an assemblage of ludicrous images which a carnival of wealth and pleasure never could collect to-

gether. It induced a king of Spain to say, looking from his palace upon a man who was laughing immoderately, "That man is either mad, or he is reading 'Don Quixote.'" History records the pleasantries of men, and women also, upon the scaffold; they jest upon their own persons, and those of their attendants; the axe itself is not sharper than their wit, and yet, on the stage, the jest of a gravedigger devotes a nation to barbarism. Such delicacy first retrenches all pleasantry from the tragic character, and the "*qualis ad incepto*," wrongly considered, has banished much of nature on seemingly classic authority. Horace means only that a character should be consistent. He laughed, as we do, at fifth act conversions, — where the parsimonious become profuse, and the jealous free and open, where hatred suddenly purifies its sullen habitation, and catastrophe becomes but another term for miracle. The actor in degree follows this absurd and narrow principle; and if he is to act in tragedy, thinks only how its dignity and its pathos are to be displayed and enforced. He leans, therefore, too much to the exclusive and the unnatural, and by degrees becomes an unfit representative of characters drawn with the freedom of Shakespeare's; and it is unquestionably true that, without a considerable feeling of comedy, tragedy itself will be imperfectly represented. This was the opinion of Mr. Garrick; and Henderson held it as an important

principle of his art, — and in his Hamlet there were gleams of gentlemanly gaiety, that sat upon his general gloom, as the bright border of the sunbeam upon a watery cloud. George Steevens asserted two things of Henderson's Hamlet: that in the instructions to the players he had less of the magister than Garrick, was more princely and at his ease; and that in the soliloquy upon death he reasoned better, and left a deeper impression of its solemn efficacy. I can only bring my recollection strongly to bear upon Henderson; I now attended him with a delight for which I know no equivalent terms; and to him I probably owe much of the devotion of my mind to Shakespeare.

The opinions of Mr. Steevens were sometimes coloured by his prejudices, and he had always a wish to lower the pride of Garrick. He felt something in the way of Johnson as to the inferior rewards of literature, and seemed to repine at the adulation which followed the ministers of the drama. He laboured to turn the jubilee at Stratford into ridicule, and, I have no doubt, enjoyed the rain that abridged the proud pageantry invented by Garrick. Yet in the preferences just given I know him to have been sincere: he mentioned them as exceptions to a very detailed admiration of Garrick's excellencies; and the power of Henderson in soliloquy was peculiar, and I think unequalled in my time. He did not, in order to avoid the audience, keep back upon the stage, or

present less than his front to the house; all tricks to avoid the danger of uttering his thoughts to others, — he stood in front, and reasoned over the pit, not to it. Thus it was in those masterly developments of Hamlet; and so he gave also the perhaps still more brilliant soliloquies of Falstaff — upon his ragged regiment, — and upon that unsurgical word honour.

However, not to anticipate, Mr. Henderson followed his Hamlet, on the 26th of June, by Leon, in "Rule a Wife," on the 15th of July. Here he let out much of his comic vein, preparatory to the full tide of pleasantry which burst upon the town in his Falstaff, in the first part of "Henry the Fourth," nine days after. Then it was that Palmer, in the Prince of Wales, studied the humours of his companion, so as years afterward to supply the best consolation for his loss. Will the reader indulge me in a slight reference to myself on this occasion? Surrounded now by all the editions of our great poet, I had then nothing better than Rowe's careless republication in 1709, had never seen Falstaff upon the stage, and had nothing to aid my youthful imagination but a few, perhaps vague, recollections of Quin, and Love, and Shuter, which an old friend of our family sometimes did his best to embody for me. I read my Shakespeare, and, I confess, doubted the interpretation of those great commentators of the character. Whatever they had preserved, resolved it-

self into the braggart and the drunkard, and I saw no attempt to mark a mind fertile beyond parallel in wit, and even oppressed by the tumultuary images of humour that crowded uncontrollably into his fancy. I saw Mr. Henderson, and saw without shame how far he had exceeded all that I could suspect to be warranted by Shakespeare. He stands before me with the muster of his recruits legible in his eye, and I hear the fat and chuffy tones by which he added humour to the ludicrous terms of the poet's description. "Such as fear the report of a caliver, worse than a struck fowl, or a *hurt wild duck*." "Such *toasts and butter*." "Gentlemen of *companies*." "Slaves as ragged as *Lazarus* in the *painted cloth*." "A hundred and fifty *tatter'd prodigals*, lately come from *swine-keeping*—from eating *draff and husks*." "Unloaded the *gibbets*, and *press'd* the *dead bodies*." "There's but a shirt and a *half*" (O that half!) "in all my company: and the half shirt is *two napkins tack'd* together, and thrown over the shoulders, like a *herald's coat*, without *sleeves*." The bursts of laughter he excited by this, which he did not hurry, but seemed mentally to enjoy, as the images rose in succession, were beyond measure delightful. He made his audience for the time as intelligent as himself, and a syllable of pleasure was not lost upon them.

This was in truth a proud season for Henderson. His other characters were Richard the Third;

Don John, in "The Chances;" Bayes, in "The Rehearsal;" and Falstaff, in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." He had the honour to close the season, on the 15th of September, in Hamlet, as the great magnet, though I have not yet enumerated half the rival attractions. Foote continued to act some of his old favourites, — Smirke and Mrs. Cole in the "The Minor," Cadwallader in "The Author." Miss Farren had wisely performed Maria in "The Citizen;" but as to Rosetta, in "Love in a Village," it was not in the metropolis that she should have trespassed musically beyond a single song, "Ramonnez ci, ramonnez là," or such another pretty trifle, as an accomplishment merely. She was duly appreciated, however, by Colman, who entrusted to her and Palmer his grand card, "The Spanish Barber," upon which he had laboured very successfully, and rightly anticipated would be a durable attraction to his theatre.

This season, at the Haymarket, was the most remarkable that stands upon record. Colman, however, failed in one point of his management. He revived Gay's opera of "Polly," on the strength of Dubellamy and a young lady, a Mrs. Colles; but its original insipidity allowed it, after a dozen nights, to drop once more, perhaps for ever, into oblivion. It seemed to be acted for the sole benefit of Gay's old patroness, the Duchess of Queensberry, who attended the representation frequently,

and gratified her age by reviving the feelings of her former friendship. I hope that she was so happily deluded as never to doubt for a moment the excellence of the opera, and that her poet maintained his post of honour to the last. It was an early subject of my remark, that much deference was paid, and cheerfully, almost proudly paid, to those venerable persons who among ourselves had enjoyed the society of Pope, or mixed at all in the circles which he frequented. The honours of genius are seemingly shared where they are felt, and we become greater by a just admiration. On the Continent it was a proud distinction to have seen and conversed either with Voltaire or Rousseau.

Notwithstanding the attraction of Henderson, the manager had engaged Digges to act at the "little theatre," and on the 14th of August he made his first appearance in London, in the character of Cato. A modern must smile at the notion of Cato in council, dressed exactly like Sir Roger de Coverley, as chairman of a bench of justices; but at this time costume had hardly touched us with the desire for accuracy, — if the dress was not modern, and the actor looked venerable, enough was done for the exterior of Cato; the wig occasionally required a renewal of its powder from the vehemence of the orator. Even my friend Kemble, when he first acted the great patriot in town, appeared in exactly the same garb as Digges.

The tragedian of the North was an actor, however harsh and peculiar, of great value, and perhaps in him might survive something of the stern, manly manner of the old school. He was not greatly followed here, and in this season only added to Cato, his Wolsey in "Henry the Eighth," a masterly performance, and his Sir John Brute, in "The Provoked Wife." Mr. Colman, I should imagine, saw that he had done wisely to remove himself from Covent Garden, and rival partners to a narrower sphere and undisputed control.

CHAPTER V.

AT the commencement of the Drury Lane season of 1777–78, Miss Priscilla Hopkins gave her hand in marriage to Mr. Brereton. This lady by her second nuptials contributed not only to the domestic comfort so valuable to a man like Kemble, but, intimately blended with his fortune and his fame, became a model how the most arduous duties of life should be discharged.

On the 2d of October, a very lovely and entertaining singer and actress, Miss Walpole, made her first appearance, under the new managers, in the character of Rosetta. She became a great favourite with the public. Her figure was finely formed, and, subsequently, in Sheridan's afterpiece of "The Camp," Miss Walpole's accomplishments might possibly increase the military mania of the country.

A theatre is seldom anxious for more than poetical justice, but men catch the tone of their neighbourhood, and the criticism of Bow Street made an attempt at Covent Garden to reform the "Beggar's Opera." On the 17th of October, Mac-

heath's destiny was differently arranged upon the stage; and, instead of being blest in the arms of the tender Polly, he was sentenced to the lighters, to obtain ballast for so unsteady a character.

But in what terms am I to notice the next theatrical event? On the 20th of the month, Samuel Foote expired at the Ship Inn, Dover, in only the fifty-fifth year of his age. He had disposed of his theatre to Colman, and meditated a tour upon the Continent for the recovery of his health, and even the tranquillity of his mind, considerably impaired by the attacks of an infamous woman. There is an accusation so foul, that it injures where it cannot attach, and to have been suspected is almost fatal. The villainy of these times, or the baseness of Kenrick and the Duchess of K., launched this pestilence at the heads of both Garrick and Foote.

In our present state of calm enjoyment of the wit of one, and the science of the other, — for Garrick reformed the stage, and will be felt for ever in the nature which he restored to the actor, — it is hardly to be credited that Kenrick, a scholar, honoured with academic degrees, should have dared to insult his country in the foul pursuit of his revenge at some managerial decision of Garrick. To the disgrace of that country itself, the fifth edition now lies before me of his wretched parody of Virgil's ninth Eclogue, "Quo te, Moeri, pedes?" which he calls "Love in the Suds; or,

the Lamentation of Roscius for the Loss of His Nyky," printed for Wheble in the year 1772. The impudence of Kenrick has never been exceeded. He dedicates his polluted mess to Garrick himself, and warns him against an indiscreet application of what does not concern him. Yet his very first page exhibits the following line, with the accompanying note to it :

"Whither away now, George, into the city?" [1]

But I will revive the perishing infamy of this man. Thus he pointedly answers three queries, put to him publicly with the signature of candour :

"I did not mean to throw out the most scandalous insinuations on the character of Roscius, nor any insinuation more scandalous than his conduct.

"Calumny I detest, but I think vice should be exposed to infamy; nor have I so much false delicacy as to conceive it should be treated with tenderness in proportion as it is abominable.

"I have not acknowledged that I entertain a very different opinion of Roscius; on the contrary, I declare that I entertain a very indifferent opinion of him."

Kenrick is not badly characterised by the following epigram, written by himself to his own honour :

[1] The brother and constant companion of Roscius; the Mercury of our theatrical Jupiter, whom he despatches with his divine commands to mortal poets and miserable actors.

> "The wits who drink water, and suck sugar-candy,
> Impute the strong spirit of Kenrick to brandy.
> They are not so much out; the matter in short is,
> He sips *aqua-vitæ*, and spits *aqua-fortis*."

However, Garrick very properly moved the Court of King's Bench, in the person of the famous Dunning, for leave to file an information for the libel, and retained Wallace, Dunning, Mansfield, and Murphy.

Foote, I have been told, did not conduct himself with the fortitude that became so great a man, and was melted into tears by the declaration of his innocence. But it is wrong to assume the possession of great mental firmness, from the unrestrained sallies of satire, and the desperate imprudence of wit. I have frequently been astonished at such retrocessions of spirit. It will be a source of constant regret to me that I never enjoyed the conversation talents of Foote; a reverend friend of mine felt himself, to use his own strong expression, in a state of "intellectual rapture," and I once hoped that he might preserve by writing some record of the "delight which quite bewildered him." But I fear the period for any exertion with the pen is past.

Murphy sadly disappointed the world by his "Life of Garrick," which in fact, however difficult such a process must have been, sunk below the level of Tom Davies. He promised us a life of Foote, and I for one did suppose that he might

have made collections for it, during their long and close intimacy; but I do not think he really had much anecdote in his stores; and, when I used to meet him, his collection was very scanty and too frequently repeated. Murphy never gave his life of Foote. When he died, however, we had a slight, a very slight compensation, in Foote's "Life of Murphy." Foote's name, like that of Selwyn, or Quin, or Jekyl, is the synonym of humour; and frequently appropriates the invention of another brain. I cannot course him through the Encyclopedia of Wit.

I stop to give one instance of the readiness of his wit, which I do not fancy to be common. Foote was to dine in the country, and the whole of the party was assembled, with the exception of a whimsical gentleman, who wore a black scratch wig. At length the company, looking out, saw somebody in motion down a fine avenue of trees; but a dispute arose at the windows, whether it was their friend. "It is certainly he or Charles the Second," said Foote, "for I see a black wig bobbing up and down among the oaks."

I am quite ignorant how far mental uneasiness may contribute to such a disease as palsy. Foote had one attack of it upon the stage, during the last season of his public appearance. His impressions upon quitting town were gloomy; he was haunted by presentiments of his own end. He contemplated his fine collection of dramatic por-

traits, and, stopping some time before that of Weston, uttered an exclamation of foreboding tenderness. At Dover he had a second attack of paralysis, and lingered only a few hours. His body was brought to town and privately interred in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey. But Mr. William Jewell, so many years treasurer of the "little theatre," devoted a friendly tablet to his memory in the Church of St. Mary at Dover. Poor Jewell should, however, have entrusted the inscription upon it to any taste but his own; for, though it may be as creditable to Foote as to Prince Harry —

> "To have a tear for pity, and a hand
> Open as day to melting charity," —

yet these excellencies, I willingly think, he but shared with the greater part of the theatrical community; and his genius merited a distinct and ample commemoration. The best, because most gentlemanly, portrait of him is a head, life size, in crayons, full of intelligence, seemingly as he dressed when to mingle in that high society which he frequented, without the smallest sacrifice of his independence, and delighted beyond any chance of competition. This picture was in the possession of Jewell, and I do not think it has ever been engraven, or, if it have, so indifferently as to bar discovery.

Murphy was not yet become insensible to the fame of tragedy; and he secured, by a few alterations and additions, another theatre and a somewhat different audience to his "Orphan of China," which was acted at Covent Garden on the 6th of November, 1777. I honour this gentlemen assuredly upon many accounts; but for nothing more than the manly expostulation which he addressed to Voltaire on the first appearance of this tragedy, in the year 1759. In reference to the rival play, "L'Orphelin de la Chine," he dared to say to the author that, though he had worked up his first act and the beginning of his second like a poet indeed, his exertion then slackened, or rather gave way all at once, the tumult of the passions was over, Gengiskan talked politics; the strong impulses of maternal affection are lowered into cold unimpassioned narrative; and even the Tartar conqueror becomes Le Chevalier Gengiskan, and sighs as true lover-like sentiment as ever breathed in the fantastic gardens of the Tuileries. He reminds him of his own criticism upon Corneille, and shows that what he condemns in Theseus can never be endured in Gengiskan.[1]

MURPHY.

"The iron swarm
Of *Hyperboreans* troop along the streets,
Reeking from slaughter."

[1] Voltaire is, however, felt to have influenced the dialogue of Murphy; and we detect the imitator sometimes by an uncouth and scientific term.

VOLTAIRE.

"J'ai vu de ces brigands la horde *hyperborée*
Par des fleuves de sang se frayant une entrée."

Unlike Horace Walpole, whom his dear blind woman, Madame du Deffand, ensnared into a very submissive retreat from the controversy he had even provoked with Voltaire, Murphy with infinite delicacy reminds him of his own compliment to Metastasio, — "*Ah! le cher voleur! il m'a bien embelli*," — and then proceeds to track the French poet in his own plunder of Shakespeare. He reproaches him with his injustice to the great Islander, and affirms his sentence of disingenuousness and ingratitude by the authority of an excellent critic, who had observed "that wherever in his *avant-propos* he has spoken in degrading terms of the great English bard, it may be deemed a sure prognostic that his play was the better for him!" All this, too, seasoned by a just tribute to Voltaire's genius, which, at whatever distance, the writer is ambitious to imitate.

It may be proper to observe with reference to Voltaire's play, which appeared four years before Murphy's, that the latter portion of it had been weakly conceived at first; and he condemned himself to the *amende honorable* of rewriting the whole of the fourth and fifth acts. But original deficiency of interest is rarely supplied by such afterthoughts. At the time when that singular

man was correcting the great Tartar, he was also employed upon his General History and other works, so as to occupy a number of copyists. In addition to all which, he was alarmed almost to insanity by the escape of his "Pucelle d'Orléans," indiscreetly trusted to a female friend, which a fellow of the name of Grasset had grossly interpolated, and offered even to himself for sale. However, this might only be a pilot balloon before the grand machine to ascertain the *aura popularis*, and the reception of his most splendid folly. His efforts to interest the king's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, are quite amusing. In the midst of this mass of occupations he received Rousseau's "Essai sur l'Inégalité des Conditions." The reader may smile at the pleasantries by which he reproves an insane philosopher. "I have received," he says, "your new book against the human race. You will give pleasure by the truths you tell, but you will not correct mankind. So much wit was never before employed in the desire to render us beasts. One feels anxious to go upon all fours when reading your work. However, as I have lost the habit these sixty years, I feel unhappily that it is impossible for me to recover it, and I leave that natural temptation to those more worthy of it than you and myself."

To be brought by any accident to speak of such men is an *allure naturelle* (Voltaire's expression) which it is impossible for me to resist; and a book

whose object is entertainment alone may permit, if it do not authorise, allusions so very miscellaneous.

Before I entirely resign Murphy's "Orphan of China" to the oblivion which I fear is its settled lot, I think myself bound to repeat his acknowledgments to two of his performers, Mrs. Yates and Mr. Garrick. "You would have beheld, M. de Voltaire, in Mandane, a figure that would adorn any stage in Europe, and you would have acknowledged that her acting promises to equal the elegance of her person; moreover, you would have seen a Zanti whose exquisite powers are capable of adding pathos and harmony even to our great Shakespeare;" and then, with an address equal to that of Voltaire himself, and for which Garrick should have been bound to him for ever, "let me add, sir, that the genius of this performer has been in Mahomet, in Merope, and Zara, the chief support of your own scenes upon the English stage."

As Mr. Harris most unquestionably could not do even tolerable justice by his actors to this revival, I must presume him to have been caught by the "Orphan," merely because he was a native of China; and that his taste for spectacle revelled in the spendid assemblages of foreign dress presented by the original inhabitants, and their more warlike, perhaps more picturesque, invaders.

The next production at this theatre was an original tragedy by Miss Moore, called "Percy,"

which, though wanting the true masculine nerve, will, from a kind of hereditary feeling, always interest those whose infancy is taught even to lisp the strong antipathies between the Percy and the Douglas.

Many years have passed away since I read this tragedy. I have already, too sportively perhaps, commemorated the style in which the hero of Northumberland was acted by Lewis. The Douglas of Wroughton had a great deal of the feudal spirit. Miss Moore received the hint, and more than the hint, of her play from the romantic story of Raoul, Sire de Coucy, who flourished in the reign of Philippe Auguste, toward the end of the twelfth century. This *preux chevalier* adorned the bravery common to his age with softer and more ingenuous accomplishments, — his love was equal to his courage, and his muse became the faithful and not inelegant interpreter of his passion. That, however, was unfortunate, — the object of his affection was the lady of a chieftain named De Fajel.

In the year 1191, De Coucy, after greatly distinguishing himself, died at the siege of Acre. A few days before his death he wrote tenderly to the sovereign of his affections, and charged his faithful squire to bear literally his heart along with his epistle. The messenger selected for the conveyance of this text and glossary was so unfortunate as to be seized by the Sieur de Fajel himself, who was but too well read in such mysteries; and

conceived a savage and unnatural revenge. I will not inquire into the comparative cookery of that gallant period, a subject which merits the learned inquiry of Doctor Kitchener himself; but De Fajel conveyed a portion of his rival's heart into some dish served up to his wife, and informed her of the sort of food of which she had unconsciously partaken.[1] The unhappy woman did not struggle to endure the inhuman indignity, but, totally overwhelmed in grief, steadily refused every succeeding nourishment, and died in a short time of exhaustion and horror.

It is unnecessary to point out how much the well-known tragedy of "Percy" has partaken of the romantic adventures of Raoul de Coucy.

At the other theatre, William Shirley, a gentleman more accomplished perhaps as a merchant than a poet, on the credit of his "Edward, the Black Prince," brought out a tragedy called the "Roman Sacrifice," which was but coldly received, and lived only through four nights. As it never received in its season the honours of the press, I know nothing of it, but am inclined to think it

[1] There may be in the cup
A spider steep'd, and one may drink, depart,
And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge
Is not infected: but if one present
The abhorr'd ingredient to his eye, make known
How he hath drank, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
With violent hefts: I have drank, and seen the spider.
— *Winter's Tale*, Act ii. Sc. 1.

rather insipid, since the Black Prince himself failed to inspire its author.

There have been men distinguished by a single speech, and some by a single play. Home really should have disclaimed every dramatic work but "Douglas," and ought to have been wiser than, in 1778, to trust his tragedy of "Alfred" upon the stage. It was acted but three times, and is, happily for his fame, forgotten. Voltaire once whimsically attributed to Home his own comedy called "L'Ecossaise," of which he affected to give a translation under the name of Jerome Carré. The chief object of this piece was the immolation of his great enemy Fréron, with the slight nominal change of Frélon [1] (wasp). But the end of such creatures is as obvious as their origin or the course of their existence —

> "So morning insects, that in muck begun,
> Shine, buzz, and fly-blow in the setting sun."

[1] Fréron was a journalist who persecuted Voltaire through much of his literary career. He might at times fasten upon mistake, but his great delight was to calumniate his motives. I neither suppose nor assert the character to be peculiar to Paris, and some unhappy scribblers may even sell their spleen in London; but the following *viva voce* exposition by Frélon, of his own merits, exceeds all my experience of the English reptile.

"Si vous avez quelque ami à qui vous vouliez donner des éloges, ou quelque ennemi dont on doive dire du mal, quelque auteur a protéger ou à décrier, il n'en coûte qu'une pistole par paragraphe." — *L'Ecossaise* Act i., Sc. 2.

I object to the rate of exchange, though large sums have, I know, been given, or lent, upon such occasions.

Voltaire should have been superior to the notice of so contemptible an enemy. As to "L'Ecossaise," Home could only, as they say, claim the kindred of country; the humour, the delicacy, the interest were equally above the Scotch tragedian, and even the philosopher, though undoubtedly one of the first of men.

Colman, however, really adopted "L'Ecossaise" in English, and dedicated his "Merchant Freeport" to Voltaire. The acknowledgment of the Patriarch of Ferney it would be cruel to withhold, though, alas! who can translate the neatness of Voltaire?

"SIR:—Were I able to use my own hand I would take the liberty to thank you in English for the present of your charming comedies; and were I young I would come to see them acted in London.

"You have infinitely embellished 'L'Ecossaise,' exhibited under the name of Freeport, in fact, the best character in the piece. You have done also what I did not dare to do, you punish your Fréron (Spatter) at the end of the comedy. I was unwilling to allow this rascal a longer appearance upon the stage—but you are a better sheriff than I am, and are right to see justice done.

"When I amused myself in composing that little piece for my theatre at Ferney, our company, actors and actresses, besought me to bring Fréron upon the stage, as a character absolutely original. I did not know him, had never even seen him, but I am told my portrait is the most exact of resemblances.

"When the piece was acted at Paris this reptile was present the first night. He was recognised at the very out-

set, and saluted with clapping of hands, hootings, and revilings from every quarter; at the end of the play the whole audience escorted him from the theatre with shouts of laughter. He has had the happiness to be acted and ridiculed on every stage in Europe, from Petersburg to Brussels. It is sometimes advisable to sweep away these spiders from the Temple of the Muses. I think you have also your Frérons in London; they are not quite so wretched as ours. During the conference at Poissy, a good Catholic wrote thus to as good a Protestant: 'Sir, matters are quite equal on both sides; it is true the learned with you are more learned than the learned with us, but in recompense, our ignorant are infinitely more ignorant than yours.'

"Continue, sir, to enrich the public with your delightful productions. I have the honour to be with due esteem, etc.,

"VOLTAIRE.

"*To George Colman, Esq.*

"*Dated 14th November, 1768.*"

Home and Hume were relations — the spelling of the name in Scotland has always so fluctuated. The *Journal Encyclopédique* of April, 1758, thus amiably discriminates those authors: "L'auteur de 'Douglas' est le ministre Hume (Home), parent du fameux David Hume, si célèbre par son impiété." His present most Christian Majesty Charles X. has thus spoken of Voltaire, "C'était un garçon d'esprit! (un garçon!) mais cet homme-là a fait bien du mal — il a bouleversé toutes les idées reçues." I must not, on the other side, withhold the slender consolation afforded to the memories of such men by the following pointed sentence from the great sovereign of Prussia: "Donner,"

says he, "des marques d'estime à cet admirable auteur était en quelque façon honorer notre siècle." To justify our esteem for so admirable an author is in some way to do honour to the age we live in.

Mr. Cumberland, "the Terence of England, the mender of hearts," had been, since the production of his "West Indian," disinclined to the severer Muse, or prohibited from making to it any public offering, or, as it might be, sacrifice. He had endeavoured to weave somewhat of female interest into Shakespeare's "Timon," but it may be supposed with indifferent success, and certainly not by the choice even of the best among the presented means in the play.

I ought at all hazards to undergo the peril of naming what I think the best. Lucilius, a gentleman of Timon's, is in love with the daughter of an old Athenian, who returns his affection; but their fortunes are disproportionate, and the father threatens, if she marry without his consent, that he will choose

> "His heir from forth the beggars of the world,
> And dispossess her all."

Timon immediately rears up the fortune of Lucilius to that of his mistress, and it is on the gratitude of her gentle bosom that I would found the attempt, at least, to soften the "dangerous nature" of Timon. Such a character would class with the Bellario, perhaps, of "Philaster," and

somewhat approach the Imogen of Shakespeare; but though I might preserve the same male disguise, the grateful principle, which must be the soul of the part, would sufficiently discriminate Lucilia from her two gentle but powerful rivals.

The truth is, that Shakespeare had completed his own grand and terrible monodrame, and the gentler emotions only disturbed and weakened the savage misanthropy that reigned in measure fully equal to the former exhausted prodigality. But sacrifices have, in other cases equally strong, been made to the necessity of securing an audience (in Lear, for instance); and the hope of maintaining a great Timon upon the scene might be as much justification as an audience, and more than a manager, would require. But the additions should at all events have been in the character of the play, and by no means have reminded Sheridan, and more than a rival wit, of "the mimicry of Falstaff's page."

The arrival of Henderson in London offered to Cumberland the aid of one accomplished tragedian; and he carried along with him to Drury Lane Theatre the historical play of the "Battle of Hastings," — an unfortunate subject, for who loves to be reminded of the absolute and oppressive conquest of his country?

Mr. Cumberland has availed himself of even the liberty of the novelist in varying character and supplying events. The simple Edgar Atheling

became a heroic personage; and Harold, who had flown from the expulsion of the Norwegians in the eastern parts of his kingdom, to combat the yet more formidable Normans in the southern, is equally misrepresented. The falsification of history by the modern bard serves but the object of a night, and is little known in the theatre, and not at all beyond it. The heresies of Shakespeare in his dramatic histories (for he discriminates them from tragedies) proceed from the chronicles which he copied, the only history known to his age; and the worshippers of Richard the Third, from Buck to Walpole, have only to regret that he was unhappily born too early to receive them for his guides, instead of the Lancastrian writers, who, it seems, so foully calumniated that "meek usurper."

One thing was certainly decided on this occasion, though it was not that battle which gave name to the play, — it was that Henderson's person was essentially unheroic. I notice with some doubt that his very declamation, however suited to our elder dramatists, from its freedom and variety, seemed unallied to language written by a modern. Certainly it was in full contrast to the style of every other performer in the play. I hardly dare pronounce upon the question; though I fear the effort to communicate the natural to the artificial, while it takes the stiffness out of the verse, but leaves it to the positive feeble-

ness of its meaning; and the effect upon the ear, in consequence, is as flat as the appeal to the understanding or the passions. He who reads with attention the elaborated dialogue, for instance, of Doctor Johnson's "Irene" (I would quote still more artificial structure did I know where it was to be found) must, I think, perceive that much of its effect resides in the choice of the measured magnificence of the old school of orators. Whether the modern bard do or do not possess the "*mens divinior*," he must be declaimed by the "*os magna sonaturum*," or his efficacy with his contemporaries is very slight indeed. It may be said, "Relieve the actor from the necessity of being unnatural, by writing as your fathers have written," and it is a pity that the recommendation, while it suggests the remedy, does not supply the means.

It may be, perhaps, of little moment to notice the death of William Havard, on the 28th of January, 1778. He was a worthy, unobtrusive, harmless man, one of the objects of Garrick's talent for mimicry, and that is all; but at Paris the profession sustained a loss which, in the judgment of the best French critics, has never been repaired, the death of the great tragedian Le Kain, on the 8th of February. He had long sustained the credit of the Théâtre Français, and was the only remaining artist who had been formed in the true school. Le Kain was an example that there are no barriers insurmountable to genius. His

tenderness of soul rendered the coarsest features beautiful, his ardour converted a very plebeian figure into the just representative of the hero. He did not neglect the aids of costume, and by incessant application corrected the early imperfections of his voice. He acted a favourite character, Vendôme, with so much effort as to bring on an inflammatory complaint, which carried him off in a fortnight. But he did not perish as the lover of Adelaide, nor come by his death in "a fiction, in a dream of passion," if we are to credit the gossip of the Parisians. That ingenious people attributed their loss to his unbounded attachment to a Madame Benoît, for "whose dear sake," it appears, he had acted Vendôme in a manner so prodigiously effective.

The famous *bon mot* of Le Kain cannot be too often repeated, until the feeling it reproved be entirely done away. To an officer, who in his presence used very contemptuous language, while contrasting with the splendid fortune acquired by an actor the condition of a soldier, reduced, after long and important services, to exist upon a miserable pension — no other advantage: "What then, sir, do you think it nothing to be supposed entitled to the right of talking to me in this manner?" The privileges of honour are not to be estimated by money; and he must be unworthy of such distinction who can measure it against opulence sordidly acquired. In the case before us there

is much more to be said. The art practised is certainly liberal, and in its perfection of as rare occurrence as the appearance of any other natural phenomenon. Genius is a comet, except in one material point, — it displays its amazing brightness, excites our gaze and wonder, and is often erratic in its course; but who, at its departure, can calculate its return? Le Kain had acted before Voltaire at his own private theatre, and indeed that great writer had taken unusual pains in preparing the actor to be the medium of his own glory; yet he never was so happy as to behold his pupil upon the stage of Paris. It was a few days after Voltaire quitted France for Prussia that Le Kain was permitted to make his début at the Théâtre Français, and he died just before Voltaire's return to the capital, after an absence of twenty-seven years. The philosopher had long outlived his dramatic genius, and survived even its representative.

It may be worthy of a slight digression to consider the very peculiar essence, if I may so express myself, of dramatic power. Every other property of a great mind may remain; the keenness of application, the strength of reasoning, the grammatical science of language, the brilliancy of wit, the smartness of repartee, the utmost refinement of taste. We inquire for the writer of "Alzire," and "Mahomet," and "Zaïre," and we find him sunken to the author of "Irene." Yet his imagination was full of his youngest offering to Melpomene; and

on his arrival in Paris, after a fatiguing journey of five days, in the month of February, and in the eighty-fourth year of his age, he passed the whole of the night in correcting the two latter acts of his tragedy. When Madame Vestris, who had undertaken his Irene, visited him in the morning, the old gentleman with amazing neatness thus addressed her: "J'ai été occupé de vous, madame, toute la nuit, comme si je n'avais que vingt ans." Ah, madam, I have been occupied with you the whole of the night, as if I were but twenty. The empire of the passions is the region of tragedy — it is essential not only to think but feel. Can we not then conceive the full power of our own Shakespeare at eighty-four? I answer at once, "Without a miracle, I for one cannot conceive it."

I will not refuse myself the pleasure of noticing the appearance of a burletta which has frequently amused me, "Poor Vulcan," written by Dibdin. Quick here made a very whimsical and lasting impression. The music was light and gay, as the nature of the composition required. But whatever musical science was to gain from either Dibdin or Shield, it now sustained a loss, which nearly half a century has certainly not repaired, in the death of that great man, Doctor Arne, on the 5th of March, 1778.

The doctor's father was the famous political upholsterer immortalised by Mr. Addison in the 155th number of the *Tatler*. He neglected his

proper business in Covent Garden to encumber the seats of the park, and amuse idlers like himself with political discussion. This was the man who is painted by the English La Bruyère as "encumbered on a sultry day with a loose great-coat and a muff,[1] with a long campaign wig out of curl, and farther adorned by a pair of black garters buckled under the knee." It is curious, at all times, to learn the shifts of poverty to look important; and to observe the vigilance of remark, as to dress, by which a spectre so troublesome as penury is to be known and avoided. He is represented as closing his tedious harangues by a usual importunity for the loan of half a crown. Addison, whose munificence, at least upon paper, was never questioned, adds on this request, "In compassion to so needy a statesman, and to dissipate the confusion I found he was in, I told him, if he pleased, I would give him five shillings; to receive five pounds of him when the Great Turk was driven out of Constantinople," which he very readily accepted.

Steele endured, as usual, a great deal of obloquy from Mr. Addison's treatment of the upholsterer.

[1] The last male whom I remember to have seen encumbered, or comforted, by this unusual article of dress, was the father of the present Earl of Liverpool. I saw him sitting in the House of Peers, with a small hand-muff reposing on his knees, such as Lord Oxford used to purchase for his friends at some fifteen shillings apiece, and which might be compressed into such a coat pocket as gentlemen were then permitted to wear.

Arne probably occupied time that our modern Cato would have wished to appropriate otherwise, at his neighbour Button's in Covent Garden. But of Arne, as a parent, the destiny was propitious far beyond all common felicity. His son, Thomas Augustine, was a composer of the highest excellence; indeed almost the last musician of our own school whose writings mean anything. His daughter, Susannah Maria, was the equally celebrated Mrs. Cibber, whom our fathers never mentioned but with a tender delight, that shows her to have shared at least her brother's power, and to have been the gentle mistress of our affections, —

"Affectuum potens at lenis dominator."

As to Doctor Arne, he perhaps possessed more "air" than any one of our great composers. He rarely repeats[1] himself; and the subject dictated by the poet's words is beautifully worked out into a natural flowing melody, never disturbed by that lunatic, Effect, who in the modern school scorns all unity, and will not allow one sentiment the duration of four bars, but starts away into *capriccios* that amuse, perhaps, by their wildness, or give the unnatural delight of needless difficulty amazingly surmounted.

[1] Such poverty is but seldom allied to beauty; yet in music there is one striking instance of it, — Jackson of Exeter. One of his canzonets contains his whole secret either as to cantilena or harmony. Yet how beautiful the little he has written!

His works for the theatre are almost innumerable, when, in addition to his operas, we remember all the exquisite songs which, at the request of the manager, he wrote for any novelty or revival of the day, and which too often, —

> "Like rich and varied gems inlay
> The unadorned bosom of the deep."

Almost all the scores of Arne perished in the conflagration of Covent Garden Theatre. By scores the musical reader knows I mean the orchestral distribution of the composition into instrumental and vocal parts, — the whole science of harmony and mystery of accompaniment.

I reflect with infinite pleasure upon the circumstance that I first heard the music of Arne sung in a style which I must presume to have been his own: when a succession of musical sounds was plainly delivered, the fair note occupying all its proper time; not docked and curtailed for the intrusion of the graces, the eternal *appoggiature* characteristic of modern execution. That we are capable even still of better things, where the power to give them exists, is demonstrated by the astonishing charm which attended the singing of "In infancy our hopes and fears," by Madame Vestris. What ever surpassed it in simplicity or steady truth of tone? In my much loved retirement I hear of her efforts since in various departments of the drama, for most of which she can be only

slenderly gifted; and it reminds me of the honours which a Roman Emperor was for bestowing upon his horse. The steed was a beautiful and perfect work of nature — but why should he be consul?

It might have been supposed that Arne's genius would have made him wealthy; but though his father's mania, politics, was not the cause of his embarrassments, the more excusable attachment to the fair sex is said to have plunged him in many and even serious difficulties. The print of Arne resembles Rogers, the poetical banker.

On the subject of his sister, Mrs. Cibber, I once gave great offence to a critic of the day by saying that "from the greater female interest in certain plays, she would have overwhelmed Garrick." It had always been credited that the great actor was extremely sensitive upon the subject of popular favour, and that he even practised many arts as a manager to secure to himself the most constant preëminence. When new pieces were presented to him, he is said to have looked rather anxiously to the comparative value of the male and female characters; and as it was by no means favourable to a tragedy to be performed without Mr. Garrick, so he might deem it equally below the public expectation and his own consequence for him to accept a character inferior even to one other in the play. I alluded, I remember, to three instances of this sort. I said that "the true secret of Mr. Garrick's coldness to 'Douglas,' 'Cleone,'

and the 'Orphan of China,' was that in them the female interest predominated, — Mrs. Cibber would have overwhelmed him;" using Mrs. Cibber here as the principal actress of the time, and not at all intending a comparison between the talents of those great performers. But our critic really almost heats himself into anger upon the bare notion that, however unequal the weapons, his great actor could possibly be foiled. It leads him into false logic, as well as unnecessary contest, for thus he mentions their combined performances: "Mr. Garrick performed with her in more arduous characters, those of Shakespeare and Otway, yet there is no record of her power to overwhelm him." If the writer mean that the disparity between the female and male character be greater in the plays of Shakespeare and Otway than in the three tragedies above mentioned, the whole dramatic world will be of a different opinion; if he do not mean this, the remark is nothing to the purpose.

But on this subject I am unwilling to leave a doubt even in the critic's own mind. Nothing can be less liable to disturbance than the mind of a genuine critic. We will, therefore, if he will have the goodness to accompany me, look at these "more arduous," or rather, indeed, only characters written by Shakespeare and Otway which Mr. Garrick could have acted with Mrs. Cibber. He acted Romeo to her Juliet, — but Romeo is the

superior character. Othello, if he had continued to act it, greatly exceeded Desdemona. Hamlet, in the same or even greater proportion, transcended Ophelia. A man must be as insane as Lear himself to suppose that Cordelia approaches him in histrionic display. So much as to Shakespeare. Otway has only two plays, "Venice Preserved" and the "Orphan;" and I believe that Jaffier and Pierre and Belvidera are pretty equally written, and that the same thing may be said of the parts of Castalio, Chamont, Monimia. I believe I have noticed the whole of these "more arduous" characters. There is not among them a single instance of a great and transcendent female part to which the male character was strikingly inferior. I have been tempted to show that where the ingenious critic designed to crush me with his science, the blow has neither strength nor skill.

But, after all, if I had ventured to suppose that "any mortal mixture of earth's mould," in unequal or even equal parts, could have shaken the supremacy of Garrick, should I have been singular? Let the critic read the following passage in Lord Orford's ninth volume. "I never could conceive the marvellous merit of repeating the works of others in our own language with propriety, however well delivered. Shakespeare is not more admired for writing his plays than Garrick for acting them. I think him a very good and very various player; but several have pleased me more, although, I allow,

not in so many parts. Quin, in Falstaff, was as excellent as Garrick in Lear; old Johnson far more natural in everything he attempted. Mrs. Porter and your Dumesnil surpassed him in passionate tragedy; Cibber and O'Brien were, what Garrick could never reach, coxcombs and men of fashion. Mrs. Clive is at least as perfect in low comedy — and yet to me Ranger was the part that suited Garrick the best of all he ever performed. He was a poor Lothario, a ridiculous Othello, inferior to Quin in Sir John Brute and Macbeth, and to Cibber in Bayes, and a woful Lord Hastings and Lord Townley. Indeed his Bayes was original, but not the true part: Cibber was the burlesque of a great poet, as the part was designed, but Garrick made it a garreteer. The town did not like him in Hotspur, and yet I don't know whether he did not succeed in it beyond all the rest. Sir Charles Williams and Lord Holland thought so, too, and they were no bad judges."

Heaven forbid that I should compare the talents of the two critics together; as to their ages, one had reached his maturity at the time of observation, the other could be but a youth.

The winter theatres offer little to my notice, at the close of this season, but the sale of Mr. Lacy's share of the Drury Lane patent to Messrs. Sheridan and Co. As I never knew how the one party was reduced to sell, and still less how the leading

proprietor was ever enabled to buy, I choose to drop the stage curtain over this matter of business. The theatre closed on the 28th of May with the sixty-fifth night of the "School for Scandal," —

"That ran, and as it ran, for ever will run on."

Colman opened his Haymarket on the 18th of May, and Miss Harper became the most vocal of his "haymakers." She wanted something in Rosetta, but it was by no means a sweet and pure style as a singer. It was rather the style of her rank, and this more from timidity than any deficiency of refinement.

My predecessor, as a historian of the stage, Thomas Davies, had failed in his business as a bookseller, and, returning to his very humble efforts as an actor, for a single night, took a benefit on the 27th. He chose — "a stroke of undesigned severity" — the comedy "The Way of the World," and after a silence of fifteen years performed the part of Fainall. Davies's countenance was Garrick's, with all its fire quenched. His expression was placid and genteel, and in my youth I used to call in upon him, and enjoy his kind and communicative spirit, in the small parlour behind his shop in Russell Street, Covent Garden. In his difficulties, he obliged me with sundry books, in which his own name had been written. I hope even then I felt that it increased their

value. I regret to see that some subservience to Steevens and other commentators, with perhaps the stage depreciation of Jonson to aid it, led poor Davies to write inconsiderately as to the feeling of Ben for Shakespeare, and that Mr. Gifford has involved him, in consequence, in a very severe chastisement, bestowed upon all those who prattled about Jonson's malignity. I wonder he did not see the disparity of his own course. How could Davies sully the fame of Jonson?

On the 11th of July, the manager of the "little theatre" brought out his summer comedy, "The Suicide," which I saw repeatedly during its run. Colman had now determined to draw largely from Fletcher; for he here used his play called "The Coxcomb," and followed it in a few weeks by an alteration of his masterly production, "Bonduca." The opening scene of this tragedy is by many degrees the best in the English drama; and Digges was "himself alone" in the manly character of Caratach. I cannot omit the opportunity of giving some of its noble features, and when the reader shall have banqueted upon the force, the ease, the truth, the nature of Fletcher's hardy Briton, he may turn to the more refined and scholastic display of the same hero by Mason.

The Queen Bonduca having obtained a victory over the invaders, soon forgets their character, and insults her enemy. Her cousin Caratach thus reproves her:

"*Car.* You call the Romans 'fearful fleeing Romans,
And Roman girls, the lees of tainted pleasures:'
Does this become a doer? are they such?
Bond. They are no more.
Car. Where is your conquest, then?
Why are your altars crown'd with wreaths of flowers?
The beasts with gilt horns waiting for the fire?
The holy Druidës composing songs
Of everlasting life to victory?
Why are these triumphs, lady? — for a May-game?
For hunting a poor herd of wretched Romans?
Is it no more? — Shut up your temples, Britons,
And let the husbandman redeem his heifers;
Put out our holy fires; no timbrel ring;
Let's home and sleep; — for such great overthrows,
A candle burns too bright a sacrifice,
A glow-worm's tail too full a flame."[1]

Caratach then takes his revenge by a satirical picture of the Britons.

"Have not I seen the Britons, (*Bond.* What?) dishearted,
Run, run, Bonduca! not the quick rack swifter;
The virgin from the hated ravisher
Not half so fearful? not a flight drawn home,
A round stone from a sling, a lover's wish,
Ere made that haste that they have. By [the Gods]
I have seen these Britons, that you magnify,
Run as they would have out-run time, and roaring,
Basely for mercy roaring: the light shadows,

[1] This powerful expression, printed, too, by Shirley, himself a poet, in the folio 1647, was thought corrupt, and *a* became *of* at the next turn; though that change demanded an *'s* also to the word tail. Nobody could see that the verb "burns" was equally governed by the candle and the glow-worm.

That in a thought scur o'er the fields of corn,
Halted on crutches to 'em. Yes, Bonduca,
I have seen thee run too, and thee, Nennius;
Yea, run apace, both; then when Penius,
The Roman girl, cut through your armed carts,
And drove 'em headlong on ye down the hill;
Then when he hunted ye, like Britain foxes,
More by the scent than sight; then did I see
These valiant and approved men of Britain,
Like boding owls, creep into tods of ivy,
And hoot their fears to one another nightly."

For powerful sarcasm, figurative beauty, and overwhelming vigour, what is there like this? But the chidden train have just breath enough to remind Caratach that he had also fled. They but furnish him with new matter, honourable alike to himself and to his admired Romans.

"*Nen.* And what did you then, Caratach?
Car. I fled too,
But not so fast: your jewel had been lost then,
Young Hengo, there; he trasht me, Nennius:
For when your fears outrun him, then stept I,
And in the head of all the Roman fury
Took him, and with my tough belt to my back
I buckled him; behind him my sure shield;
And then I followed. If I say I fought
Five times in bringing off this bud of Britain
I lie not, Nennius. Neither had you heard
Me speak of this, or ever seen the child more,
But that the son of virtue, Penius,
Seeing me steer through all these storms of danger,
My helm still in my hand, my sword my prow,

Turn'd to my foe my face, he cried out, nobly —
'Go, Briton, bear thy lion's whelp off safely;
Thy manly sword has ransom'd thee: grow strong,
And let me meet thee once again in arms;
Then, if thou stand'st, thou art mine.' I took his offer,
And here I am to honour him."

But I must here close the extracts from this most magnificent scene — I already hear the monitor. Everybody has Beaumont and Fletcher. Yes, and, not to catch the tone of Caratach, I know pretty accurately the condition of all the volumes. Happily for the possessors, books cannot be displayed till they are bound. The sharp edge of the binder's plane absolves the paper-knife from its hopeless task. It gives me the greatest satisfaction to say that Digges was the very absolute Caratach of Fletcher. The solid bulk of his frame, his action, his voice, all marked him with identity. I mean assuredly to honour him when I say that it was quite equal to Kemble's Coriolanus, in bold original conception and corresponding felicity of execution. There are reasons, however, as Bottom says, why this play can never greatly please. Its close leaves our love of country without hope. The heroic Bonduca compels her daughters to swallow poison, and drains the bowl herself. Caractacus, after the loss of Hengo, is persuaded to surrender himself to a brave foe, and is marched away for Rome to swell the triumph of Suetonius; but not before he has uttered one

sentiment as to making peace with an invader, which shall close this, I hope not misplaced, triumph of Fletcher.

> "That hardy Roman,
> That hopes to graft himself into my stock,
> Must first begin his kindred under ground,
> And be allied in ashes."

The widow of the late Spranger Barry, perhaps indiscreetly, all things considered, married again at Dublin. Her husband, Crawford, was, as an actor, nothing compared with Barry. Though he had not Barry's height, he had certainly not Barry's gout, and was, when I saw him afterward in Pierre, a very fine figure. I have heard that the great actress herself was much offended at the scanty measure of his town success.

As the casualties of theatres of any size call for brief notice in a work like the present, I know of none which excited greater interest than the death of the younger Linley, who was unfortunately drowned at Grimsthorpe, the Duke of Ancaster's seat in Lincolnshire, on the 5th of August. He and his accomplished sister were, by invitation, to pass the summer amid a great variety of elegant festivities, to which no people in my time could more powerfully contribute. His death left a melancholy impression of more than common length, and it employed, I think, the pathetic talent of Mr. Sheridan.

Among a number of agreeable features which distinguished Colman's house, one was a rather particular attention to musical farces, and I even still remember the effect of Bate Dudley's "Flitch of Bacon." Edwin's Tipple was an exquisite treat. Had he but imitated the habit which christened him, he might have long continued the most diverting creature that the modern stage has known. Pardon one of the slips of age. The actually modern stage, that of 1825, has its own comic wonder, Liston; but, it may be feared, not for any extended period. I understand him to be happily independent in his circumstances, and much disposed to retirement.

The present Haymarket season, 1778, saw on the boards, for the first time, the younger Bannister, then a youth of eighteen, who acted for his father's benefit the very amusing character of Dick in "The Apprentice." I have already noticed the attention paid to him by Mr. Garrick; and am to record the success of his appearance here, on the 27th of August, 1778, as commencing the long train of his comic triumphs. He, with many others, who must present themselves to memory, was never so perfectly at home anywhere as on this first stage of his theatrical journey.

CHAPTER VI.

IT might be supposed that Drury Lane Theatre would have proved a safe harbour for the only actor who seemed to have formed himself at all in tragedy upon Mr. Garrick; but it was quite otherwise. Mr. Henderson had been engaged by Mr. Sheridan at the very handsome salary of ten pounds a week, besides buying up the forfeiture on his articles with Palmer, the Bath manager, by a privilege to act there the unpublished "School for Scandal." Yet, strongly as Garrick now delivered his opinion in favour of Henderson's talents, he by no means realised at Drury Lane the promise he had raised in the Haymarket. Colman had rewarded his exertions by a sum very near three hundred pounds, and had every disposition to serve him; but the actor would not allow himself his full advantages with that excellent man, for, in the daring folly of mirth and wine, he absolutely mimicked Mr. Colman before a large company, at the manager's table; and if the wit became afterward cool toward the mimic, it can excite no astonishment. It would have been indiscreet, if

he had even been an actor, — it was indecent toward a manager, a scholar, and a gentleman, his patron and his host. But the mimic is content to show his own power, and indulge the malice of others; and the victim of this ungenerous sport —

"He most must laugh" —

he must, according to the everlasting prescription of Jaques in such cases, "seem senseless of the bob," — in order that any lurking folly about him may not be "anatomised."

The causes of Henderson's inefficiency at Drury Lane were various. The School of Garrick had possession; and though the new actor, who had never served under their master, more resembled him than they who had, they yet turned themselves and most of their friends against him; and the critics in their interest occupied the daily press with all the illiberal sarcasm and ignorant decision to be expected from persons of slender reading and immense importance, constantly hurrying into a cabal, and doing their "deed of darkness" in mystery and in haste. The style, too, of Henderson did not assimilate with the tone of the company. They declaimed in a higher key, and more upon the level. The frequent undertones of the former hardly struck the ear at any considerable distance. Had I never seen him but at Drury Lane, I should not have conceived him to be the great actor that he really was. In the

summer of 1778 he went to Ireland, but universal distress and poverty had withdrawn the public from the theatre. The lord lieutenant's presence afforded a harvest of only fourteen pounds three shillings — to his Hamlet. His Falstaff brought the distressed manufacturers of the country a house of about seventy pounds. Shylock did not produce expenses, and consequently could not bestow a pound of flesh upon the most wretched claimant. Such a state of things occurred under the beloved lieutenancy of the Duke of Leinster. The few last seasons of the Dublin Theatre have, in recent times, attracted every theatrical charmer to the spot, as the great mart of talent. The present house will hold, and sometimes does, near five hundred pounds; and yet, with such a sign of prosperity in the capital, the disqualification of about twenty leading Catholics is convulsing a flourishing nation to its centre, and threatening, perhaps trying to provoke, a civil war. The only wise measure has been abandoned, — a provision for the Catholic clergy. Have they kept the people quiet? Reward them for conduct so truly Christian. May they stimulate them secretly to excesses? Remove from them, at all events, one motive, sometimes finessed, never acknowledged, — to obtain the pasture necessary even to the pastor himself.

At the opening of the winter season of 1778–79, Reddish made his first appearance at Covent

Garden Theatre in the character of Hamlet. The actor had realised what some critics have thought of the character. Poor Reddish had occasionally thrown out flashes of actual insanity, and his performance of so powerful an assumption of madness will not be imagined the best cure for a distempered fancy. It is, perhaps, to be easily accounted for that he should discover his most powerful effort in characters of this description. Reddish was also greatly admired in poor mad Tom, who indeed, on the modern stage, reduces Lear's lunacy to mere imbecility, the dotard wanderings of an idiot. It is only in the page of actual Shakespeare that the monarch is "every inch a king," even in his miseries. There we detect the cheat of Edgar, — have leisure to weigh the fashion of lunatic possessions (Flibbertigibbet, Modo, and Mahu), with that fierce fever of the brain, working upward from the heart, and raving of unnatural children, of imaginary trial, and punishment to terrify mankind. There we perceive at once the full absurdity of the dispute whether Lear is most affected by the ingratitude of his daughters or the loss of sovereignty. He retains, to be sure, the habits of command, and flows in the language of majesty; but observe the order as to Regan, and all doubt will vanish, before the voice of nature, far "above all art in that respect."

"Then let them anatomise Regan! See what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature, that makes these hard hearts?"

The sure taste or surer feeling of Shakespeare led him to anticipate a rule as to dramatic interest delivered by a great French writer, *i. e.* "to found it rather on a feeling than a circumstance; and that the personage be removed from the spectator by his rank but near to him in his misfortune."

Lear is the happiest exemplification of such a principle. The loss of his crown would touch few, for we cannot sympathise with him as a king. But as a father he is restored to our community; is invested like ourselves with a misery that all may have to bear, — the ingratitude of his children.

Nor is the other question as to Hamlet's insanity of much more moment. Such innovations upon the received opinions of men are commonly the efforts of those who, being able to add nothing to acknowledged truth, "hope for eminence from the heresies of paradox." Ingenuity speedily suggests an argument, and a sophism is easily supported by partial quotation and unsound inference. A common understanding is confounded by seeming subtlety. But, whatever becomes of the temporary argument, the character of Hamlet is safe as long as the text of Shakespeare is permitted to remain unaltered. I had an early taste of the rashness of alteration. When Lear disclaims Goneril for his daughter by the phrase, "Degenerate bastard, I'll not trouble thee," a critic remarked on the passage, "Tate has 'degenerate viper,' which we think better." Now a de-

generate viper can only be one whose original venom is become inferior to its virulent stock, — the very contrary to what the poet would have us conclude; namely, that as to Goneril, the milk of human kindness had been so completely turned into gall she could be no child of Lear's.

As a modern House of Commons legislates upon questions of literary property, I wish the excellent minister for the Home Department would bring in a bill to preserve the purity of Shakespeare, and punish all invasions upon his language as severely at least as those upon mere manor-right. The gentlemen of the country are even a more respectable body than the country gentlemen; and as to his works, every liberal being is a copy-holder.

Sheridan had not thought even a temporary trifle below his talents, and in this military season brought out an entertainment called "The Camp." It answered the purpose extremely well, and had every justice in the representation that an author could desire, but which a manager alone can at all times secure. Pilon, too, had a farce at the other house, called, still more pointedly, "The Invasion:" I have forgotten it; probably its merits.

Kenrick, notwithstanding his treatment of Garrick, made himself so important to managers that Harris brought out at Covent Garden his comic opera, called the "Lady of the Manor." It was merely an alteration from Charles Johnson's

"Country Lasses, or the Custom of the Manor." Pope seems to have been able to lay nothing heavier to this author's charge than his own weight — unless indeed it were his frequenting Button's every day in the hope of seeing Addison; a happiness not to be balanced by an awkward niche in the "Dunciad."

Henderson read the fables of Æsop so delightfully, as written by Vanbrugh, that old Sheridan thought the piece might be suffered as a two-act farce upon the modern stage. But audiences sometimes overlook the poetic truth that "men are but children of a larger growth," and would by no address of the powerful comedian be lured back to their early friend. The truth is, that the fable of the piece was completely lost in the fables of Æsop. The house got tired of an eternal lecture; and looking about for something that they could exert their spleen upon, they fastened on that horrid savage, the country squire, who, one hundred years back, they say, loved his hounds better than his wife. As modern times were, I suppose, uncursed by such an animal, the audience damned the character as entirely out of nature.

The last day of the year closed the existence of John Dunstall, one of those happy beings whose nature cuts short all ceremonial, and who are approached to general affection by some jovial or familiar compellation. Jack Dunstall, as every-

body termed him, was an actor of comedy, as it lies between the rustic and the splenetic, — not reaching to the highly voluptuous in character. Of Foresight and Sir Sampson Legend, he must have been the latter. He could not get nearer to Falstaff than the Spanish Friar. His companionable qualities led him into numerous societies, of which he was the admired songster. As I have sat when young listening to my father, who would sometimes sing at my entreaty that glorious old sea song :

> "Thursday in the morn, the nineteenth day of May,
> For ever be recorded the famous ninety-two;
> Brave Russel did espy, at break of day,
> The lofty sails of France advancing to."

He always concluded by saying, "Ah, boy, you should hear Jack Dunstall sing that song!" I quote it now from memory, and could hardly endure to read it. Dunstall was always highly respected and beloved, and a steady and useful servant of Covent Garden Theatre. He had only entered his sixty-third year when he quitted this mortal stage, which he had delighted by no mean powers, either vocal or humourous. I have just pointed to recollections, which the youthful reader is in his turn to enjoy; and in the sometimes painful descent of age toward the common harbour, it is even wise to cultivate and dwell upon these early pleasures. With our present blunted

sensations, we know that they once were keen; and the perhaps undue celebrity given to what did delight us, while it adds to the stock of anecdote, may be pardoned the slight tinge with which it is coloured by our vanity. There is considerable merit in every age; and it should always be remembered that the present will one day become the past, and the excellence now disputed receive all the immunities of antiquity.

I am here reminded of a very amiable lady, who for a series of years honoured me with her friendship. On the 13th of January, 1779, Mr. Henderson married a daughter of Mr. Figgins, of Chippenham, in Somersetshire. One sister of Mrs. Henderson's became the wife of that accomplished scholar, Doctor Henley, and another died recently unmarried. Mrs. Henderson was worthy of her husband, and, as far as her quiet and ladylike habits permitted, would at times revive again some of the many festive scenes that were adorned by his sparkling gaiety and unbounded good-humour. A few years only are past since I saw her borne to join once again her excellent husband in the proudest spot of the noblest mausoleum in the world, the Abbey Church of Westminster. She was not herself at all theatrical, nor given to recitation in the slightest degree. If she had ever trusted her voice above the common tone of polite conversation, much might have been preserved of Henderson's peculiar vein of pleasantry, for her

memory was excellent. She had lived during six too rapid years among the friends of the great actor; and few men, even in his attractive profession, were ever surrounded by more learned or more brilliant companions. Of him and them it was her delight to speak. She loved her independence, and upon her daughter's union with Mr. James Moore, the brother of Sir John, the general, she devoted a long but not a melancholy widowhood to the occasional society of friends, by whom she was greatly respected, and a pretty general acquaintance with the literature of her period. I have frequently conceived her to resemble strongly the portrait of Mrs. Montague, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, I mean that in years; but I am sensible that prominent features and pale complexions, where the habits are thoughtful and the manners ladylike, class themselves unavoidably in advanced life, and the portrait of one may not fancifully be taken for the resemblance of all.

At Drury Lane Theatre the most important novelty from Henderson was certainly King John; and in the great scene with Hubert his deep smothered undertones had even a terrible effect upon those near enough to enjoy the cunning of the scene. The distant auditor complained, as will constantly be the case in theatres of any size, unless a mode of utterance be adopted by the actor very far indeed removed from the natural elevation

or usual articulation of the voice. Yet I am here referring to a theatre not half so large as our present incumbrances. The inference which is material to our taste may be thus drawn. The usual attractions of the old stages will seem bare and insufficient on the modern. The common interest will be heightened by a spectacle, and by degrees the principal be swallowed up in the accessory. In the meantime what will be the comparative fate of the ancient and modern drama? The one will be eternally read, and seldom played; the other acted in its day, but never read.

On the 20th of January, 1779, Mr. Garrick expired at his house in the Adelphi. Mr. Pott, the surgeon, pronounced the immediate cause of his dissolution a palsy in the kidneys. As is commonly the case, I understand, in such complaints, his mind was undisturbed, his feelings tranquil, a stupor sat upon the brain, and the last scene closed without a groan. Davies has repeated the silly cheat of some player, in a supposed quotation from Horatio, which escaped him on seeing such men as Doctors Schomberg, Heberden, Warren, and others enter his apartment, as friends, to try whether their skill could save him.

> "Another and another still succeeds,
> And the last fool is welcome as the former."

In such a situation, at least, Mr. Garrick was no actor, and life itself no jest. Besides, he had not

at any time absolutely despaired of recovery; and, from his natural politeness and good sense, could never merit the salutation which his own Lear drew forth from the indignant but faithful Kent, —

> "Ay, do!
> Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow
> Upon thy foul disease."

On Monday, the 1st of February, he was magnificently interred near the statue of Shakespeare, in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey. It is remarkable that Mr. Garrick was honoured with Purcell's grand funeral service, by the choir and a full organ, the body received by the Bishop of Rochester at the great west door. Is money the mere regulator on such occasions? because we have since attended so many silent funerals of great men, that we should like to know the exact sum for which the most exalted genius might receive these vocal honours.

Among the pall-bearers of the great actor were to be seen the Duke of Devonshire, and the Earls of Spencer, Camden, and Ossory. He was followed by Doctor Johnson, by Burke, Dunning, Colman, Barré, and Charles Fox. Every kind of commemoration attended his excellence; but there was one omission which, perhaps, I may account for truly enough, though I only surmise it. Dodsley's Annual Register, both in its chronicle and its appendix, had nothing beyond the common

notices of death and burial, and the index omits even those.

Perhaps Mr. Burke, who conducted that publication, meditated an article from his own hand; the hurry of his life, and the incessant calls upon his pen, might lead him to postpone it, and at the moment of going to press, nothing had been supplied beyond the daily article in the newspaper. It is greatly to be regretted. Although Burke had not known Garrick so long as Johnson had, he knew him better, and was a fitter judge of his merits. He had no unmeasured contempt for his profession, nor any physical incapacity for its enjoyment. Had Johnson spoken of his talents, he must have in a great measure trusted to common fame. Burke had attended him as a master of elocution, and a most profound observer of mankind; he attributed his excellence on the stage to his philosophy of life, and found thus a cause alone adequate to such effects. Of Garrick's farewell performance, the same Register contains not a single word, which I account for in the same manner.

His brother George died two days after the funeral of Mr. Garrick; he had been extremely useful to him in his management, and knew exactly and unambitiously the proper sphere of his abilities.

Mr. Sheridan produced, on the death of his great predecessor in the management, a monody,

which Mrs. Yates delivered on the stage. Had the composition itself allowed much variety in the manner of its delivery, Mrs. Yates could not have supplied the changes, — her style of recitation was heavy and monotonous, though musical. It was heard with solemn respect, and its close was like a relief from a stately and gloomy ceremonial. Sheridan did here what he did through life; he used freely everything recollected that made for his purpose. In addition to his obligation to Cibber for —

> "The actor only shrinks from Time's award,
> Feeble tradition is his memory's guard," —

he remembered obviously Lloyd's "Actor," and its paraphrase and commentary, the "Rosciad" of Churchill. A few of his descriptive touches are masterly beyond common portrait; and reading Sheridan we think of Reynolds.

> "The expressive glance — whose subtle comment draws
> Entranc'd attention, and a mute applause;
> Gesture, that marks, with force and feeling fraught,
> A sense in silence, and a will in thought."

Among the novelties of the season, expectation was much interested about a tragedy from the pen of Jephson. It was brought out at Drury Lane Theatre, on the 8th of February, and called the "Law of Lombardy." It was the least popular of his productions. The subject is that of Shake-

speare's "Much Ado," a nauseous villainy interrupting the happiness of virtuous love. It is the tale of Geneura in Ariosto's fifth book, who inserted it in his "Furioso," as Spenser did into his "Faërie Queene," because he thought himself, as to episodes of all kinds, only bound to see that they were entertaining. The audience did not find this quality in the "Law of Lombardy;" it was in force only nine nights, and was then repealed.

Covent Garden, on the 13th, presented a very pleasing singer to the public in the person of Miss Thornton. Although not the first of Rosettas by many, she discovered a singularly clear and most pleasing quality of voice, and became one of those steady favourites who always delight and are never to be displaced. Every reader will recognise in this character the late Mrs. Martyr. She seemed to form herself on Catley, but she had only the shrill pipe of her predecessor; the genius, the soul, the enthusiasm did not animate a second frame in music. Doyle, who was the Hodge to Miss Thornton's Rosetta, had voice enough for the whole village; but he could not stop at the rustic, he was vulgar. This distinction is highly important — it was known to the first Blanchard; it is now felt, and uniformly seen, in Knight, of Drury Lane Theatre.[1]

[1] Since this sentence was written, that valuable performer has made the last exit common to all professions.

The promise of Mason, the poet, had been great; but I presume the progress of Church preferment made him think it indecent to allow his talent to wander toward the stage. Like most men, he summoned criticism to confirm him in prejudice, and justified, in a few letters of no great merit, his preference of the Greek drama. He, however, did not disdain to make some few alterations in his "Elfrida," for Covent Garden Theatre, and Giardini wrote some new music on the occasion. Mason himself was not meanly skilled in choral and scientific composition. This also tended strongly to enamour him of the Greek choruses, to which music is supposed to have been a powerful adjunct. But Music is seldom a useful friend to Poetry, it is rather a mighty neighbour; they who invoke his aid perish by his assistance. It may be worthy of remark, that Bishop Hurd, the friend of Mason, seems to have shared with him these classical predilections. Warburton had commented Shakespeare, and Hurd was sufficiently disposed to idolise the pursuits of his master; yet in a few slight notes on Milton, which he bestowed upon Warton, he thus expresses himself: "Milton shows his judgment here, in celebrating Shakespeare's comedies rather than his tragedies. For models of the latter he refers us rightly, in his 'Penseroso,' to the Grecian scene."

Daly, the Irish manager, was tempted to try his

fortune here as a successor to Barry, in perhaps his masterwork, Othello.

The punsters despatched him in their usual manner, —

> "A poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard — no Moor."

Having lost Barry, and gained only Daly, the public was relieved in the mode suggested by Edgar, —

> "The lamentable change is from the best,
> The worst returns to laughter."

Crawford soon followed him in Pierre. The great actress, in respect to her first husband, Barry, denied him the privileges of Jaffier on the stage.

On the 20th of March, Mr. Cumberland brought out, at Covent Garden Theatre, his masque of "Calypso." The audience were deaf to her enchantments; and the wonder seems to be, that Cumberland for a moment could think they would be otherwise. The subject belongs to the ballet, and accordingly we have seen "Télémaque" at the Opera House at once the most elegant and attractive spectacle that human grace, to animate the picturesque, perhaps, ever achieved. The Calypso of the Garden was a mere mortal, and met a pretty general doom — nor has the press preserved what at least should have been poetry of the

highest order. Homer and Fénélon are genuine sources of inspiration.

The season produced nothing more truly comic than the "Who's the Dupe?" of Mrs. Cowley. In the original cast, King performed the gownsman Gradus. In his person and expression he looked almost the head of a college. He appeared superior to ridicule. But the author's choice was regulated by his extreme volubility and neatness, and he spoke the garniture of Alma Mater, the virtues of the Cornelias and the Gracchi, with the enthusiasm of one who had been applauded on a learned theatre. John Bannister, who, after Lamash, succeeded to the character, seemed half disposed to laugh himself at the critical parade that he delivered. But his mortification, to be unsuccessful in spite of all his oratory, and perhaps in consequence of it, had more farce in it than King condescended to; and at eleven o'clock at night was the mode best suited to revive a lagging attention, and secure the indispensable applause.

Just before the close of the season at Covent Garden, namely, on the 6th of May, another tragedy by Miss More was produced, called "Fatal Falsehood." It made no great impression upon the town; but the ingenious lady, whose farce had been just commended, had received an impression which greatly disturbed herself, though I cannot think it much affected the equanimity of managers.

Mrs. Cowley had written a tragedy, called "Albina," which, in the usual way, had been tendered, I think, to both theatres. Her tragedy had not only been rejected, but the fair author fancied that her fair sister in poetry had in some way benefited by the rival production.

Mrs. Cowley carried the irritability of our happy, or unhappy, tribe quite as far as I ever saw it carried. On the present occasion she wrote an angry preface, and, one would have thought, must have then quitted this mortal stage — of tragedy, at all events. The mutual wants of the parties render the accommodations of such quarrels remarkably easy; but I forget that few readers have ever seen the smile of a manager! It happened to Mrs. Cowley, and the case is not a rare one, that her earliest productions were thought her best, and her husband going abroad, the good-natured world of criticism insinuated that the productions of the wife were necessarily the worse for it. Now I do not know that "The Runaway" is a better comedy than "The Belle's Stratagem;" and I do not think that the public have ever said so. Facility, in fact, was the greatest bar to Mrs. Cowley's professional improvement. She caught up a subject eagerly, and worked upon it in haste. She read with great brilliancy, and if she asked an opinion, it was difficult for it to be a judgment. Besides, who can bring himself to disappoint the gay expectation of an accomplished female?

I have already hinted that Henderson's situation at Drury Lane Theatre was far from pleasant to him. He began to entertain the *goût de comparaison*, and to fancy himself entitled to the first salary of the theatre, which Smith enjoyed, — fifteen pounds per week. He had carried Mrs. Henderson with him to Ireland, and the patronage of the lord lieutenant had made for him a very considerable emolument, a sum not below three hundred pounds, and he was even pressed to stay there. However, a negotiation with old Sheridan, on behalf of his son, had been going on during the summer, and the actor offered himself for twelve pounds per week the following season, and fifteen the next to that.

It will not be supposed that I should undervalue the talents of Henderson. They were of the first order; but he was born for antiquity, — the modern dress and the modern language did not suit him. As far, therefore, as it might be the system of a theatre to keep the genius of our fathers before the town, he was of infinite value. Shakespeare and Fletcher and Massinger lived now but in Henderson. But our young patentee looked another way. He might be excused if he overrated his own application — his own talent he could not overrate. He saw himself, and others also saw him, as another Congreve; an unfailing source of modern comedy, — in dialogue, he had equalled his masters; in scenic contrivance, he

had in one instance gone infinitely beyond them. With access to every observation of life, in all its ranks, what was to limit his delineation? Many a golden day-dream of this kind must have shone before his fancy, and his favourite Cave of Mammon, in Spenser, might sometimes seem but a picture of the treasury of his theatre. He would naturally, therefore, look with preference to those performers best suited to comedies like his own. Smith had in such a high, and perhaps the highest value. He was in truth an absolute gentleman, as the character then showed itself; I mean with a dignity which did not sit stiffly, but that regulated the whole man. The grace of Smith did not remind you of Noverre, though he knew him well, and lived among the fashion whom he taught. It was peculiar to himself, and seemed to spring from the perfection of his form and the manliness of his mind.

While in his own sphere he was delightful, in tragedy he reached the soldier of courage and honour; but the wider displays of nature, the unfoldings of the human heart, the whole moral mystery of man as it rests upon the page of Shakespeare, Smith called only into imperfect being. Thought from his lips never seemed to quicken into language. He was uniform and heavy. After thus touching his merits and his defects, I am obliged to confess that, had I been manager of Drury Lane, I should certainly have

thought Smith the most useful acquisition. He was nearer the staple of their manufacture. He better agreed with the other talent of their company. Henderson went to Covent Garden Theatre on the terms he had proposed to old Sheridan, and Miss Younge removed at the same time to a house of which she became, both in tragedy and comedy, its very highest ornament.

On the 18th of June, 1779, Miss Walpole was married to Edward Atkyns, Esq., of Norfolk. That very charming woman quitted the stage in consequence; and, gaining the matrimonial prize, she certainly left a blank in the theatre. I shall not be suspected of any improper feeling in what I am going to say — as if I repined at the rewards of merit in any profession, or, in the spirit of worn-out despotisms, were for confining any talent to a particular sphere. I have heard of instances in which managers have considered female perfections as almost a property, and have ventured upon even rude expostulation with the intended monopoliser of their charmers. Perhaps the public claim may be yet stronger upon the skill that they have nourished with their applause. For the most part I should think such unions miscalculated. In domestic life, with every splendour around her, the former actress must feel a languor that at first may be taken for ease, but will soon be known to be wretchedness. Talent, whether it die away or not in its disuse, will want the frequent attestation

to its preëminence to secure self-esteem. The new sphere demands the display only of common qualities; the former profession is for the most part by the proud mentioned with contempt, and remembered by her who has left it with a sigh. The independent has become dependent. A queen once said, "My drawing-room will become a green-room." Had I been a great actress in the circle I would have left it to its splendour, and have disdained to move about it upon sufferance.

At Colman's this summer a comic opera, called "Summer Amusement," was very successful. There are unions of genius; Beaumont and Fletcher were most constantly united; but the practice was common in our greatest age of dramatic composition. The authors now joined suitably in the production of a single effect were Mr. Andrews, a manufacturer of gunpowder, and Mr. Miles, who was in the Office of Ordnance.

On the 14th of August, O'Keefe, the very genius of musical farce, produced his very attractive "Son-in-Law." It still takes its turn among the laughable recreations of the theatre; and those who, either physically or morally, know how to value a laugh, will always love the memory of its author.

A very amiable, artless, and even clever man, whom we have lost, among many alterations which showed his love for old English poetry, this sum-

mer at Richmond, for his own benefit, tried the effect of the "Two Noble Kinsmen," under the more catching title of "Love and Valour." This play upon its title-page bears a combination till then unseen, — William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, who are stated to have been its authors. And indeed, if internal evidence can be at all relied on, no literary fact stands upon evidence which I think more incontestable. I shall take the opportunity thus afforded me to throw, I hope, a steady light upon the subject.

The commentators upon our authors differ as to the portions of this play attributed to Shakespeare. Some critics think them decidedly his; others the imitations of Fletcher of his peculiar manner. But he who could imitate so accurately, and so much, could have imitated more, and have carried the resemblance through the whole play — *qualis ab incepto processerit.* Yet nothing is more evident than the marks of two distinct manners, — one the habit of condensed forcible expression; the other somewhat looser, and, though equable, diffused and of a feebler tone. There is no ground either for supposing that these two bards ever wrote in conjunction. Shakespeare seems always to have stood alone, though frequently, it is true, upon another man's ground. My own theory, and it is mine, I believe, exclusively, the reader shall have. I believe, then, that Shakespeare, about the year 1608 or 1609,

devoted some time to the perusal of Chaucer. I conceive that had it been earlier we should have more evident marks of his devotion scattered through the series of his dramas, — because no great author ever showed his track of reading more decidedly than Shakespeare. His use of the "Faërie Queene" is constant, of which the first three books were published just as he commenced his dramatic career. Spenser seems to have been a lexicon to him of the highest poetical language; and he learned in the great land of faërie to improve even the mighty line of Marlowe, and with no "wasteful or ridiculous excess" to add to the splendid colouring of his expression.

When he retired to Stratford, and had leisure for application beyond that which "he who runs may read," I dare say he took down Chaucer with him, the great painter of manners, the abstract and brief chronicle of a former but most interesting age. We shall probably err but little in figuring to ourselves the rapturous enjoyment which Chaucer afforded him. Thynne had enabled Stowe to add a valuable glossary to his works; for I make no scruple to suppose that the difficulties found in Chaucer in the reign of George the Fourth were difficulties during that of James the First.

A dramatic mind, in all its reading, looks to the theatre, and what may be convertible to its use. With some astonishment, therefore, that it

had never been seized before, he probably caught at the Knight's Tale of "Palamon and Arcite," and marked it down as the subject of a new and splendid play. Pressed now by no immediate call from the stage, he wrote a scene occasionally to amuse himself, and upon various points of the story as he was struck in its perusal. He might leave the loose papers in the volume of Chaucer itself, and upon his death, in 1616, the care of his son-in-law, Doctor Hall, might discover the rudiments of the play among the "Canterbury Tales," and transmit them to Messrs. Heminges and Condell, that they might ascertain their utility. With great propriety they would consult Fletcher, at that time the chief support of the Blackfriars, and his fertile fancy and rapid pen completed the play as it was printed in 1634.

Mr. Colman this summer produced a comedy called "Separate Maintenance;" it was one of his weaker efforts. I am decidedly of opinion that no modern author was ever more unequal than this excellent writer. Swathing a coxcomb is no doubt very diverting, and sometimes desirable amusement for ladies; but upon the stage its effect does not compensate its indecency. In looking around him for subjects, the dramatist is frequently caught by a laughable incident, as that, for instance, to which I have alluded in the *Spectator*, and a comedy is invented to display it. But such buildings are commonly weak. I prefer the

moral origination of the subject, namely, to correct some evil or some folly in life; to effect which a fable is formed, characters are sketched, and suitable incidents invented. The advantages are incalculable of a well-involved interest, drawing forcibly to one point, from which nothing in the piece is actually extraneous. There are many successful instances I know upon our stages of a succession of sparkling scenes with little connection; and they are acted, as I remember selected parts of two of Dryden's comedies once were, the audience neither knowing nor caring how one of the polite parties happened to succeed the other upon the same boards on the same evening. An attentive audience will require a fable regularly developed; the systematic lounger would perhaps prefer five acts from different plays, or five farces of one act each — sustained attention is too burthensome to his levity or indifference.

The winter season of 1779-80 seemed auspicious to the strength of Mr. Harris's company. In addition to Henderson and Miss Younge, who now quitted Sheridan, he engaged the very genius of entertainment in the person of Edwin. He made his first appearance on the 24th of September in Touchstone, — a part for which he had, I think, but few requisites. Touchstone has, in truth, little folly beyond his habit. His characteristics are steadiness of attachment and wanton satire.

Jaques flatters himself in thinking he could anatomise life better than he saw it done by the motley-minded gentleman. The degrees of the lie do him infinite honour. He had looked at all the masks of blustering insolence and real timidity. He had studied "The Gallant's Book of Honour," and knew the preservative for a whole skin. He is swift and sententious, and his good spirits are better to him than costly raiment. Edwin was not shrewd enough for Touchstone, and he did not excite so much merriment as Quick. But King alone spoke the sentences of this best of clowns. Instead of the common fool's coat and odd stockings, he should be dressed after the very beautiful first figure in Mr. Douce's fourth plate, and certainly carry the bauble.[1]

The powers of such actors as Henderson and Digges were favourable to the poets of Shakespeare's age. Massinger, though not so pathetic in his serious plays, nor so truly comic in his lighter efforts, as Fletcher, had yet sufficient eloquence to carry him through tragedy, and for comedy he took the usual furniture of his time, — wantons, gallants, gluttons, and gulls; but he, I think, invented nothing. His power was in his finish; his composition is faultless — he fed on thoughts —

> "That voluntary move
> Harmonious numbers."

[1] *Vide* Illustrations of Shakespeare (1807).

On the 13th of October, Cumberland produced an alteration of the "Bondman" at Covent Garden; but as he did not print it, and the play passed off with but a cold reception, I am afraid we must come to the conclusion that, upon the whole, this author is fitter for the closet than the stage; and that, with the exception of "A New Way to Pay Old Debts" and "The City Madam," Massinger can but occasionally delight his countrymen of another age. Indeed, he is commonly selected as a writer favourable to the declamation of some oratorical performer.

On the 30th of October Mr. Sheridan brought out, at Drury Lane Theatre, his most admirable farce, "The Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed." In another work I have shown the author to have been a diligent reader and imitator of our old divines. I have traced the pointed smartness of Puff to the page of Doctor Barrow, and proved a sermon upon facetiousness to be the actual source of the neatest comic dialogue we have. Sheridan was in truth a sort of chameleon; he became coloured by the objects of his recent study. His resemblance is quite unforced. He is in one page quite as like Junius as in another he was to Barrow. Upon Dangle's remark that even Vanbrugh and Congreve were now obliged to undergo a bungling reformation, Sneer thus replies:

"Yes; and our prudery in this respect is just on a par with the artificial bashfulness of a courtesan, who increases

the blush upon her cheek in an exact proportion to the diminution of her modesty."

How precisely does this resemble the mind and manner, the keenness and turn of the following sentence in Junius:

"But you have discovered your purposes too soon; and, instead of the modest reserve of virtue, have shown us the termagant chastity of a prude, who gratifies her passions with distinction, and prosecutes one lover for a rape while she solicits the lewd embraces of another."

I am persuaded that nothing but a birth in 1752 saved Sheridan from the strange competition for the honours of Junius; but although a Harrow youth may have Greek enough, and English enough, to translate the "Epistles of Aristænetus," the forms of business and the experience of events cannot be anticipated. Perhaps the best among the early efforts of prose was the masterly vindication of Lord Chatham's memory, written by his son, William Pitt, certainly at the age of nineteen.

To return to "The Critic." The greatest honour that it received was in a sportive allusion by Burke, in his masterly speech upon economical reform, in February, 1780. He just touches the conscience of the Governor of Tilbury Fort. "Rebellion," says the orator, "may not now indeed be so critical an event to those who

engage in it, since its price is so correctly ascertained at just a thousand pound."

TILBURINA.

"A thousand pounds!"

GOVERNOR.

"Hah! thou hast touch'd me nearly."

I may just observe of this accomplished man that I think his dedicatory tone, whether in verse or prose, is laboured and artificial. He is too solemn for compliment, he is too tedious for passion; yet the dedications of "The Critic" to Mrs. Greville, and "The School for Scandal" to Mrs. Crewe, will be admired for their ingenuity. Among the literary features of Opposition it may be no unpleasant one that they have generally made goddesses of the ladies of their party. But memory will excuse a poetical rapture in favour of exalted talents and unrivalled personal charms, with friendship that knew no bounds but those of honour. Let me brighten one page by inscribing upon it a name which suggests all these perfections of the sex, — Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire.

"Men may be read as well as books too much." Surely we were now too much occupied with Mr. Cumberland. On the 13th of October he had produced his "Bondman," with slender effect; and yet, "within a month," we behold him, on the 10th of November, blending with a rash hand

the "Duke of Milan" and Fenton's "Mariamne" together. It cannot be supposed that I undervalue Fenton. With Pope he could blend naturally and imperceptibly; but as easily might the great satirist unite with Hall as Fenton with Massinger in a tragedy. In passing over these feeble junctions of past times I am compelled to acquit the present of innovation. D'Avenant began the sacrilege of putting together two plays of Shakespeare. Success emboldened him to mix up baser matter. These remarks flow out of a rooted veneration for our great writers. But what are such considerations when managers demand profitable audiences, and the spoiled hero of the stage requires that a single character should be extended beyond the author's design, and stuffed out with any striking sentiment or action that may augment the quantum of his applause? Why should not the licenser take care of more than the morals and politics of the stage? Taste is one of the lesser morals.

Mrs. Griffith presented, on the 2d of December, a comedy called "The Times" at Drury Lane Theatre. Its success was but indifferent. She is best known by the "Letters of Henry and Frances," which are said to have actually passed between her husband and herself. If the worst of all friendly letters be those written with a view to ultimate publication, the best may be those which, flowing spontaneously from the occasions

of the parties, by their intelligence and nature merit such a public disclosure. I write at a period when a deluge of epistolary publications, of all times and from every sort of character, compels one to see the striking advantage of the great fire of London.

The increasing demands for novelty produced a series of hurried and imperfect pieces at our theatres. Dibdin failed in his comic opera, "The Shepherdess of the Alps;" and Cumberland, a third time in the same season, by his "Widow of Delphi." One is disposed to wonder a little at the confidence of an author whom rebuffs so repeated could not discourage; but the reliance or the hope of the manager in this case is quite unexampled, unless the modern system of a dramatic undertaker then, unknown to me, existed. The evil of such contracts between managers and authors is the certain preference it implies. If the contractor to supply the market be himself also the judge of other candidates, we are requiring from his candour a decision against his personal interest. Human nature is not calculated for such an ordeal; it shrinks from the test. Nor is this all; where the offering is rejected it by no means follows that it is despised; an ingenious contrivance may be long remembered, a smart sentence may be easily placed beyond the lapse of memory. It may emerge also at a subsequent period, and, like artificial

hair, be the graceful ornament of some other head, —

"The skull that bred it in the sepulchre."

One of the earliest and best fruits of the present cultivation of Covent Garden was the comedy of "The Belle's Stratagem," by Mrs. Cowley. The stratagem was not exactly a new one, and probable only upon the stage. There what it is necessary should be unseen is never discovered; the same woman or man is in one scene the most awkward, and in the next the most fascinating of mortals; the *alter et idem* is literally accomplished and undetected. Miss Hardy first renders herself hateful, to become as a stranger the object of ungovernable passion. Nothing short of rapture will content her. She knows the influence of the romantic, and in the display of her accomplishments throws a mystery about her person. Her dance is fashioned by the graces, and her conversation realises the Eastern dreams of poetry and love. Such was the character into which Miss Younge stepped, as if it had been but the shadow of herself, and rendered it fascinating beyond any single character of the modern stage. In the refined charmers of other comedies the parts require some disclosure of their art; they calculate their effects and teach the way to them; the tame or timid and retiring virtues are led out by them into exertion, and the triumph even of

the play is for others. Here is a unity more perfect; enthusiasm forms the plan, enthusiasm sustains the part, and is the charm by which youth and beauty and virtue become still more lovely.

Miss Younge in Letitia Hardy was never to be forgotten. Where was anything to be found more graceful than her minuet? The balance of the arms even equal to Madame Rose herself; while the superior stateliness of her figure seemed to testify that she was born to ornament a court, and to move in that measure which best represents its majesty and its grace.

But her sensibility was the greater charm, and in Letitia Hardy has never been approached. In the masquerade there is this rather unweighed sentence: "If my husband should prove a churl, a fool, or a tyrant, I'd break his heart, ruin his fortune, elope with the first pretty fellow that asked me, and return the contempt of the world with scorn, whilst my feelings preyed upon my life." I allude to it only to remark that the last line of it was uttered as if under the immediate pressure of such a calamity, and I never witnessed keener sensibility of tone and manner. The well-educated female needs no caution against the doctrine contained in this sentence. It is not easy to break the heart or ruin the fortune of either a churl, a fool, or a tyrant; to elope is the sole revenge within her reach, — an action which

such husbands will hardly regret. The disappointed enthusiast is herself the only victim, and has to struggle, probably not long, with the contempt she has provoked.

Lest my fair friends should think that I have stated a dilemma, and left the lovely sufferer without a rule, this may be sufficient: no one breach of duty can justify another; no disappointment of expectations, reasonable or unreasonable, can sanction immorality. Steady discharge of our own engagements, if punishment be thought of, is the severest if ever reflection arrive, and is the only source of consolation if happiness have flown for ever.

There are some other slips occasionally in the dialogue which exact taste should point out where the composition is in general elegant. Mrs. Racket, in the first act, says, "That may be good philosophy, but I am afraid you will find it a bad maxim." She means a dangerous practice. The maxim cannot be bad if its philosophy be good; though to act upon it may sometimes lead to disappointment.

A second claims notice because it is in complete violation of a figure the best known and the most admired of such a poet as Pope. "Misfortunes," says Doricourt, "always go plump to the bottom of my heart, like a pebble in water, and leave the surface unruffled." Our great moral bard saw the surface differently:

" Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
The centre mov'd, a circle straight succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads."
— *Essay on Man*, iv. 363.

Flutter is described by a simile which comes, oddly enough, from a female writer, yet I believe it original. "You have neither feelings nor opinions of your own, but, like a glass in a tavern, bear about those of every blockhead who gives you his." [1]

Mrs. Cowley was a lady of very superior powers, and nothing short of original vulgarity and bad temper combined could at any time have treated such a woman with disrespect. I venture to point out an instance of great skill in a writer to whom human nature was well known. Miss Hardy would captivate Doricourt at a masquerade; observe how the charms are coloured by the place, and the pictures of her fancy have a unity with the scene.

"*Doric.* What if you loved your husband, and he were worthy of your love?

"*Let.* Why, then, I'd be anything — and all! — grave, gay, capricious — the soul of whim, the spirit of variety — live with him in the eye of fashion, or in the shade of retirement — change my country, my sex — feast with him in an Esquimaux hut, or a Persian pavilion — join him in the victorious war-dance on the borders of Lake Ontario, or sleep

[1] Perhaps better, because clearer, "drinking-glass" or "wine-glass."

to the soft breathings of the flute in the cinnamon groves of Ceylon," etc.

Who does not see that this, in a drawing-room, would be mere flight, and beget some alarm for the head of the fair rhapsodist. At a masquerade the splendid vision is perfectly at home, and is received with astonishment and delight as the effusion of a heart "dearer than Plutus's mine, — richer than gold."

It was in this play that Mrs. Hartley exhibited the interesting beauties of her face and figure in the character of Lady Frances Touchwood, and that Wroughton so distinguished himself by the performance of her affectionate but unfashionable husband. The stage never had anything more masterly than Wroughton's look and exclamations when her town friends are hurrying off his lovely wife to visit the usual places of fashionable resort. Nor have I many more striking recollections than that of F. Aickin, in the character of Saville, vindicating his unsuccessful passion by preserving the wife of his more fortunate rival from the snares of Courtall. Manly, polite, earnest, and sensible, — invaluable for what we now want so much in theatres, the importance of a mature, solid, and gentlemanly figure.

Colman's summer season opened with a very pretty prelude called "The Manager in Distress." The groundwork was the apologies received from the great actors, who all preferred their cool retreat

in Lambeth Marsh, and other suburban shades, to the temperature of the Haymarket. Their letters are read between the manager and his friend in the private room. Upon inquiry, the house, for a first night, is found to look pretty well, orders and all; nothing remains but to apologise to the audience and return the money. The prompter enters for that purpose, but his plea is rendered nugatory by certain oratorical and mimetic personages stationed in the pit and boxes, who not at first being recognised by the house as professional people, a great confusion was produced. When Mrs. Webb arose to address the audience the joke became apparent, and a prodigious interest was excited.

Diderot the philosopher had written a comedy called "Le Père de Famille;" this piece suggested to Miss Lee her very amusing summer play, the "Chapter of Accidents." The fair author had every aid from Mr. Colman's judgment and experience. Palmer, Edwin, and Miss Farren were the perfect representatives of much genuine interest and humour. In its structure it was rather slight, if I remember; but it was powerfully written, and merited the uninterrupted success which attended it through many seasons.

Miss Sophia Lee, to whom the reading world is under many obligations, has hardly met with the attention to which she has so just a claim. Her father, from some infirmity of temper, had wasted

much of his life in controversy, and some of the critical spleen which he had excited seems hardly to have subsided at the literary appearance of his accomplished daughter. As she did not bend implicitly before the daily Stagyrites, they annoyed her with criticism, affecting an extreme morality. She had exhibited frailty in a female of uncommon merit, and they chose to forget the importance of the lesson in the recollection of the indecorum.

The fair author had, however, but completed her design — she had already drawn a Cecilia superior to all temptation, although, for important reasons, she had kept the work ("The Life of a Lover") from at once surprising, and why should I not say delighting, the public. There she has indeed indulged and exhausted the other side of the question. As that romance is executed in letters, so it is protracted beyond the just claims of its interest. On this occasion I will not suppress my decision against that mode of composition, — any advantages (and I do not deny that there are some) in the epistolary form are easily conciliated with a narrative in either the first or third person, and an occasional letter to a valued correspondent will break the uniformity of the work and animate the pulse of its relation. "*Rien n'est beau que le vrai;*" letters which are only limited by a quire of paper can be but rare productions in actual life. Richardson, I remember, is obliged to bestow a

general insomnia upon all his characters; they retire to rest, but always rise again to continue the record of their day.

It has been said that much of Miss Lee's personal history may be discovered in "The Life of a Lover." Cecilia, like herself, is engaged in the work of tuition, for which I have always understood the fair author to have been singularly accomplished. A most interesting and admirable lady of my acquaintance, who was some time under her care, describes her to me as very impressive in her manner, and very eloquent in her instruction. Her eye was brilliant and searching. She inspired her pupils with a respect that continued through life.

A parent can hardly fail to estimate the advantage of placing a youthful mind under a lady capable of writing the following passage, which has all the moral dignity, tenderness, and sweetness of Cowper:

"Those people know little of mental indulgence who call a winter in the country dreary. It is then that man may become justly conscious of his own importance in creation. All nature works for him in summer, and he has only, in common with every other creature, to enjoy the ripening abundance. Winter calls upon him to dispense what his foresight has saved, and renders him to the mighty mass of inferior beings a kind of subordinate providence. The wind which curls a flood of leaves round our feet sobs to the thinking soul the sufferings of mortality." — *Life of a Lover*, Vol. vi. p. 18.

The establishment of the sisters at Bath was a concern of magnitude, and most admirably conducted. The superintendence was with Sophia; Miss Harriet Lee was chiefly devoted to the school. There was no affectation about their system; they did not profess to teach what could be taught nowhere else, nor that their pupils should become informed without steady application. Purity of manners and self-respect were taught by example.

Their father occasionally needed assistance, and found it in their filial piety. Sophia wrote a comedy to free him from embarrassments; this work of genius and affection succeeded in its objects. These excellent sisters at Bath had the cordial friendship of the Linleys and the Sheridans, and the esteem of so much talent ensured them the patronage of a very wide and respectable circle.

I am apt to suppose the attention of the fair author conducted to the subject of her happiest work by the controversy to which Doctor Robertson's "History of Queen Mary" had given rise. The honour of the nation seemed to rest in some measure upon the proof of her innocence, the unrivalled villainy that surrounded her person, and the wicked persecution of a rival queen. Nor was the English nation much colder on this subject than the Scottish. A powerful interest was excited for the character of Mary, and the appeal to the heart left no room for the reflection that

to impeach our maiden sovereign was to sully the glory of England.

The plan of her "Recess" was fortunate beyond parallel. The known designs of Norfolk upon Queen Mary rendered the private marriage probable; and to produce two of the most interesting and unfortunate of the species from such a union was only continuing the calamities of a race which Voltaire conceived to be even sovereign in misery. Throwing one of these children of her rival before Elizabeth in her last moments, heart-broken, like herself, at the loss of Essex, is one of the happiest fictions of romance; and it has a pathos hardly to be approached. The great novelist of the North has yet to excite a sympathy equally profound and dignified, yet who has touched the regal character with so masterly a hand as the author of "Waverley?" Mary, Elizabeth, James, and Queen Caroline are all dramatic biography.

I have made this article somewhat fuller than I intended. But the subject of my present work calls upon me for a particular attention to female excellence, and Bath, the residence of Miss Lee, was the scene also of the triumphs of our greatest actress. I would wish to surround Mrs. Siddons by the splendid ornaments of her sex.

A speaking pantomime called "The Genius of Nonsense" was attempted at this theatre on the 2d of September. It did not beget a fashion for loquacity in the "knight of the wooden sword."

If Harlequin lose his agility he may regain his speech; but I confess I would rather have him dumb for ever so he retain his pert, unmerciful activity. The clown, moreover, should not be a man of many words.

Among the memorables of the season were a performance of Lady Randolph by Mrs. Crawford; a farce called "Fire and Water," by Andrews, remembered only for the younger Colman's jest, "it made a hiss;" Mrs. Cargill's appearance there as Euphrosyne in "Comus," and Miss Satchell's first appearance in Polly. It was the apotheosis of Polly, but her own martyrdom. The stage never in my time exhibited so pure, so interesting a candidate as Miss Satchell; her modest timidity, her innocence, the tenderness of her tones, and the unaffected alarm that sat upon her countenance, all together won for her at once a high place in the public regard, which she cultivated long and extended under the appellation, Mrs. Stephen Kemble. This young lady carried into a family abounding in talent powers of so peculiar a kind, so perfect, so unapproachable, that, if they were inferior as to their class, they shared a kindred preëminence. No one ever like her presented the charm of unsuspecting fondness, or that rustic simplicity which, removed immeasurably from vulgarity, betrays nothing of the world's refinement, and is superior to its cunning. *Double entendre* in her presence had nothing beyond the single

sense that might meet the ear of modesty. I have often listened to the miserable counterfeit of what she was, and would preserve, if language could but do it, her lovely impersonation of artless truth. But it may be gathered critically in its abstract by the negative assistance of many of its modish limitations. The fancy may restore her, or be contented at least with its own creation. That of Steele, in one of its softest inspirations, first saw her about the year 1674, on the continent of America, fondly bending over a young European whom she had preserved from her barbarous countrymen ; she was banqueting him with delicious fruits, and playing with his hair. He called the vision "Yarico." Chateaubriand, a century after, beheld it with additional charms, and named it "Atala." [1]

"You observed in her countenance I know not what of virtuous and impassioned, of which the charm was irresistible. To this she added graces yet more tender. An extreme sensibility united to a profound melancholy characterised her look, and her smile had something in it scarce earthly ;" and thus unintentionally, painting only the creature of imagination, he completed the portrait of an English actress.

[1] "On remarquait sur son visage je ne sais quoi de vertueux et de passionné, dont l'attrait était irresistible. Elle joignait à cela des graces plus tendres; une extrême sensibilité, unie à une mélancolie profonde, respirait dans ses regards; son sourire était céleste."

CHAPTER VII.

IT is time to return to Mrs. Siddons, not for the purpose, if it were practicable, of reviewing her performances in the country, but to look a little at the means of her success, as they arose out of her habits of life and her practice of the art. La Clairon used to say that the manners of a tragedian in private life should partake of the stately decorum of the stage. Perhaps the personal appearance of the tragic actress should be sketched out from the Minerva of Milton :

> "Rigid looks of chaste austerity,
> And noble grace, that dash'd brute violence
> With sudden adoration and blank awe."

She should neither encourage nor suffer familiarity. Any striking disparity on and off the stage is injudicious. We cannot reconcile the seeming contradictions. Besides that, the relaxations of private habit are apt to give a forced, a strained assumption to the dignity worn at night. The charm of Cleopatra, to be everything by turns, is the captivation of a mistress who must meet us at all moments and in all humours. I dare say that

Mrs. Siddons did not form to herself any such system of manners; when she best followed her theatrical interest she, perhaps, but indulged the tendency of her nature. It led her to a calm and rather retired existence, — much solitary reflection, and deportment, like her utterance, measured and deliberate. But, if we were to look only to the policy of the actress, such would be the conduct most advantageous. Dignified manners facilitate the intercourse with higher life (the only condition that can serve the tragic actress) and strongly detach her from the inferior ranks: the vulgar drop off; when the polish is high they cannot cling to the object. Some bitterness may be expected on the part of those whom she repels; they will remember the humility of birth, the slender prospect at one time of present honours, and repeat the prescriptive eulogies of high rank or enormous wealth. But talent of some kind or other is the common origin of both. The soldier or the statesman is ennobled for his utility; the merchant has at least industry, or he could never become prosperous. Nor is the comparison unfavourable to him who consciously bears his honours in their source about him, with one from whom the source is certainly distant, however venerable or celebrated.

But of all those who may be offended by the retired or dignified habits of an actress, the members of her own profession commonly feel them

the most, and pursue their soaring sister with the bitterest and most sullen aversion. But their admiration usually combines with their envy or their satire, and it settles in some epithet vented by malice, but aptly characterising the person, who is for ever denominated by themselves and others the "tragic queen," or the "queen of tears." In the present case, however uttered, the truth was certainly not a libel. The superiority of talent, when it is ascertained, must be borne. In any profession opportunities must occur when the failure of health or spirits will throw shades of inequality into a performance; these afford the anxious rival some immediate consolation, and a hypocritical regret at the failure may conceal the actual pleasure it affords. At last, however, the system of the actress becomes known. All her graces of action, the whole circle of her expression, the character of her declamation, are perceived, and must be eternally repeated. It is an art which she possesses, and they will attack her for her art. As truth is one, they will discover that she wants variety. They will insist upon actual instead of simulated emotion; they will allow the performance to be as fine as art can make it, but, in their judgment, "one burst of nature is worth it all." The French school at one period possessed two brilliant examples of the two manners: Dumesnil was the explosive heroine, the Clairon the profound calculator of all her

effects. The one, in the indulgence of her nerve and the force of her organ, tore her way to the heart, though she sometimes wounded the ear, and the eye accused her of frequent distortion and occasional vulgarity. Her private habits were not decorous, and she was sometimes unguarded even upon the stage. Her rival, if her organ was not equally sonorous, was never misled by it into harshness and noise. If she trusted more to her judgment than her passion she had always the safer guide. Looking at the character she played analytically, and tracing even the author up to its sources, she knew it more intimately and conceived it with more truth. We are, therefore, little astonished at Mr. Garrick's decided preference of Clairon. She was fortunate in having the pieces of Voltaire to act, and the unwearied application of the author to add every perfection that the character or its actress demanded. The correspondence of Voltaire is full of matter, but he is nowhere more delightful and instructive than in his letters to this charming woman. He weighs every word, every gesture, every look, and his praise is so elegant that it may be said to create as much excellence as it commends.

Mrs. Siddons had no aid of this sort. No writer for her was the standing theme of every tongue, the legislator of elegance throughout Europe. She could only do what had been done before, and establish her superiority in characters

long known, and in which novelty could hardly be displayed without becoming a subject of question. I have always considered the powers of Mrs. Siddons to be peculiarly her own, and her effects constantly conceived as well as produced by her own studies. They have one uniform character. There is no littleness, occasionally betraying the hesitation or lovely timidity of the sex. In conception she was even bolder than her brother, and the powers of her execution were in the volume of tone and the vigour of action greatly superior. He had constantly to struggle against a teasing irritation of the lungs, and to speak upon what may be called a safe scale of exertion. His happier sister was never balked by deficiency, she could always execute whatever she designed. Thus relying upon herself, she pursued her course for a few years wisely at Bath, — restored the tragic muse to her honours, even in a place frequented for amusement; and surrounded herself with admirers of the highest rank and of the best taste, who echoed the decision of Henderson, that "she had never had an equal, and never would have a superior." Having thus hinted the return in triumph to the capital as a matter certain, and now to be granted to invitations from managers, not solicited by the actress herself, I resume the usual record of the stage and its ornaments.

Mrs. Inchbald, whose husband had died suddenly while they were engaged in the York com-

pany, although she felt her loss keenly, was fortunately not overborne by it. Under his skilful tuition she had become an interesting, though not a great, actress, and she had conceived an ambition of adding to her attraction the fame and the profits — still more essential — of a dramatic author. London was the great mart, and she happily accomplished an engagement with Mr. Harris, the proprietor of Covent Garden Theatre. Her trial part was one of the most interesting and romantic that ever came from the fancy of a true poet — Bellario in the "Philaster" of Beaumont and Fletcher.

In the modes by which character may be developed the author will often find the business of the play itself too scanty to unfold it. He resorts, therefore, to description, as a kind of portrait by which the spectator may have a more ample knowledge than can be properly shown in action. Still further to reverse the Horatian precept, there are many incidents of a tender yet simple nature, which are better trusted to the imagination through the ear than to the eye. The first employment of Bellario is of this sort, — a pleasing helpless innocence, sitting by a fountain side, and weeping his payment to the nymph for what he had borrowed of her spring to quench his thirst; reading a lecture upon his garland of flowers, to which he had himself given a rare and mystic order, or speaking the most eloquent thanks to the great

Preserver for the prime blessings of sustenance and light — should do all this behind the scenes; as Jaques beheld and commented upon the stag in the forest of Arden, the only picture to which that of Bellario is inferior in the whole compass of the drama. Happily for the successors of Shakespeare, Bellario has not been condemned, like Jaques, to describe the scene of meditation, or narrate the floral emblems which he pressed upon the mind of Philaster. If I ever presume to refer the reader to the source of my remark, he may be assured that I mean to gratify more than his curiosity. I now beg him to convert Philaster's description in the first act of the play —

> "I found him sitting by a fountain side,
> Of which he borrow'd some to quench his thirst" —

into a narrative by Bellario that he was so found, and he will then perceive how he has succeeded to the honours of that not great unknown who sent Jaques on the stage to parade his own melancholy and morality, instead of leaving them where Shakespeare had placed them, in the mouth of one of those elegant and accomplished persons who had put themselves in voluntary exile with the banished duke.

Fletcher knew well how to make his Bellario speak his own character when it was becoming to do so. Witness perhaps the purest passage of our only diction suited to the romantic drama, —

his pleading to continue in the service of his master, rather than in fact to serve him in the suite of the Princess Arethusa:

"*Bel.* In that small time that I have seen the world,
I never knew a man hasty to part with
A servant he thought trusty: I remember,
My father would prefer the boys he kept
To greater men than he, but did it not
Till they were grown too saucy for himself.
Phi. Why, gentle boy, I find no fault at all
In thy behaviour.
Bel. Sir, if I have made
A fault of ignorance, instruct my youth;
I shall be willing, if not apt, to learn;
Age and experience will adorn my mind
With larger knowledge; and if I have done
A wilful fault, think me not past all hope
For once. What master holds so strict a hand
Over his boy, that he will part with him
Without one warning? Let me be corrected,
To break my stubbornness, if it be so,
Rather than turn me off, and I shall mend."

In this little narrative there is one beauty of the highest kind. A simulated story is rarely quite consistent. When Bellario is first introduced to Philaster, he is "the orphan of gentle parents," who, in their poverty, left him to the mercy of the elements. Here he touches the real condition of the concealed Euphrasia, whose father, Bion, had no doubt boys in his establishment whom he would prefer to the service of men

greater than himself. To give force to his argument, he a little extends the rank he had previously assigned himself. When the mind warms with feeling, the disguises of artifice are too thin for perfect concealment. The pathos of the lovely pleader is far above any praise of mine.

I hope that I do not digress at all when I thus unfold the beauties of our great authors. I will not repeat the criticisms of others; but if my own reading and taste suggest what may lead to the cultivation of sound criticism, I will avow at once that I never intended to write a mere chronicle of events, or a cold catalogue of even good qualities among the professors of the stage. The skill of an actor operates upon the primary skill of the author. The mental excellencies of the poet must be displayed, or we talk in vain of those powers of adaptation by which the stage artist turns them into shape, and bids them live and move before us in embodied force and truth and beauty.

In the performance of the seeming boy, Bellario, I believe the critics assigned the palm invariably to Mrs. Yates; and, from what I saw of that lady in my youth, I can readily believe her superiority. Mrs. Inchbald was extremely interesting, but an occasional hint of the impediment which strongly marked her conversation was perceived by the attentive among the audience. As an actress this lady never increased her value in the company.

The great painter of life, Fielding, as a dramatic writer descended to the broadest farce, the most absurd burlesque. After "Philaster," an alteration of his "Tom Thumb" by Kane O'Hara once more enlisted the stage into the service of the nursery. From that time to the present the tiny hero and his giant love and valour have insulted the reason of mankind with the cheapest among the modes of diversion. To the staple absurdity of its burlesque were now added songs of the most wretched vulgarity, and the Fair of St. Bartholomew seemed to be removed from Smithfield to the Garden on the 3d of October, 1780.

Mrs. Crawford, after an absence of six years, now returned to Drury Lane Theatre, and on the 5th of October acted her favourite character, Rosalind, in "As You Like It," with distinguished applause. This delightful work seems rather calculated for the closet than the stage, even when dignified by the greatest professors of the art, — description and satire do their utmost to conceal the want of business, of passion, and surprise. It has been thought that Shakespeare himself, by the introduction of some music (as songs, however), almost sanctioned its conversion into an opera; but what we gain by the vocal accomplishments of the heroine we commonly lose in the comparative poverty of the actress. There seems an incompatibility between excellent speaking and singing,

and what is a little curious, the singer with the most powerful organ is commonly a feeble speaker.

Suett arrived in the metropolis from York, and made his first appearance on the 7th of October, in Ralph, in "The Maid of the Mill." Few comedians have ever afforded more amusement than Suett. I cannot say that he was strongly characteristic, but he was diverting to every description of audience.

I am every way tempted to bestow more than a common notice upon the first appearance of Miss Philips on the stage, on the 11th of November, in the character of Mandane. She had, I think, scarcely completed her seventeenth year. Her first instructor in music was an organist whose name was Wafer; he had succeeded in bestowing upon his lovely pupil no mean knowledge of the science, and she accompanied herself upon the harpsichord, an instrument which through life she preferred to the pianoforte. She conceived it better adapted to the object of making the pupil sing in tune. There is a smartness which may arouse a dull ear, I confess; but the singer who is not all ear should retire at once from the orchestra. To mine the jangle of the harpsichord wires is anything but harmony. Her father had articled Miss Philips for three years to Mr. Linley, who secured her an engagement at Drury Lane Theatre, and received, as is the custom upon such occasions, one-half of his pupil's salary.

I remember distinctly the surprise which her beauty excited. She was always timid upon the stage, and really needed all the indulgence that she experienced; but there was infinite promise of musical excellence; and as to countenance and figure she realised the visions of even poetical imagination. He who came from the study of Spenser's Una beheld the seeming original of such a portrait in Miss Philips. "Artaxerxes" was a noble attempt to give to the English language and nation the charms of Italian opera. For the sake of musical impression sex occasionally gave way. Miss Prudom was the lover of Mandane, and Mrs. Baddeley wore the kingly robes of Artaxerxes; Miss Wright was the Semira. The evening seemed the triumph of beauty even more than that of harmony. Vernon was not the Artabanes exactly that one might have desired, — he was not even a low tenor, but as a musician he was admirable. It gives me pleasure to name Reinhold as the greatest singer of the traitor in my remembrance. Old Bannister had voice enough, but he had not a particle of science, and did wonders without it. In modern times we have had admirable bass singers, but some incurable awkwardness or vulgarity has usually condemned them to the choruses, immovable and unmoved organs of sometimes amazing power.

From this time Mandane has continued a trial part for the pupils of stage composers. The in-

trinsic beauty of Doctor Arne's melodies kept his "Artaxerxes" among the music first taught the female singer in private life. There was infinite spirit and variety in the airs, and perhaps he touches every stage of the tender passion with a truth almost independent of language. Thus a young female, with the usual aids to a fine voice, as she loses her timidity in singing to her friends, is soon accomplished for public exhibition; for Mandane demands no study of character, — she who can sing and walk can do all that is required.

Sheridan had now begun to devote himself to politics, and Linley's taste inclined him strongly to opera. Jackson of Exeter supplied, perhaps, more than the music of the "Lord of the Manor." Burgoyne, however, I believe, was the author of the piece, and the tenderness of the composer somewhat compensated the absurdities in the cast of the characters. He made the elder Palmer a fribble, and Miss Farren a singer. Miss Prudom's want of English admitted of an apology; she was brought up in France. Nobody ventured to ask the necessity of her appearance on our stage before she could speak our language. Drury Lane meditated a pantomime which should live more than the usual life of one, and I always understood the business of "Robinson Crusoe, or Harlequin Friday," to have been arranged by Sheridan himself. De Loutherbourg was employed upon the scenery,

and the solitary friend of our youth, in a few scenes finely acted, preserved his interest on the stage, — the necessity for pantomimic change hurried the mind out of its salutary sympathy, and reminded the spectator forcibly where he was.

Mrs. Cowley, on the fame of her "Belle's Stratagem," hurried again upon the stage. But her present offering was of a very different description from the delicate comedy just named. There is unity of design, great simplicity, and strong, though refined effect, in "The Belle's Stratagem." The audience was indifferent to "The World as It Goes," and voted the party at Montpelier exceedingly disagreeable. The fair author took a month for alteration, and brought her play again before the town under the title of "Second Thoughts Are Best." The audience did not reverse, but confirmed the original judgment. It was a total failure from hurry and want of intelligent structure. Here again we are invited to consider the paradox of national character. The grave meditating Englishman begins to build without a plan; the volatile Frenchman lays his design deeply, and excels all nations in dramatic fable. We have a wide field of observation, — in no country does character or humour present a more abundant harvest, — but we are not sufficiently attentive to the homely instruction of honest Touchstone, —

"They that reap must sheaf and bind."

Perhaps the above allusion to our drama may not inaptly introduce a few remarks upon the literary character of Mr. Edward Capell, who claims a notice in this place as the efficient licenser of the stage, and perhaps one still more distended as an editor of Shakespeare. The duties of the latter function supremely qualified him for the former. The just knowledge of Shakespeare is a touchstone by which dramatic composition will be best estimated in all ages, for is it not the same as an appeal to Nature herself? Of this knowledge no man possessed more than Capell. After a life spent upon the works of his great master, he died on the 24th of February, 1781.

It may not be incurious to examine the conception which Doctor Warburton entertained of the highest qualification an editor can possess; in other words, that on which he most valued himself. Take it, therefore, in language certainly his own. In the life of Pope, compiled from Warburton's materials by Ruffhead, is the following oracular passage:

"The truth is, that criticism (which Longinus esteemed to be the consummation of human literature) is thought to be the easy task of every witling. What has led them and their readers into this mistake, and will for ever keep them both in it, is the not distinguishing between the discovery of corrupted passages and the cavilling at those emendations which are the fruits of it. To discover the corruption of an author's text, and by a happy sagacity to restore it to that sense in which it was first conceived by the author, is

no easy matter; but when once the discovery is made, to cavil at the amended word, and to support the cavil by another equivalent, is the easy and constant achievement of these doughty critics. It is the easiest, and at the same time the dullest, of all literary efforts."

The glaring absurdity of the above dictum cannot fail to strike the reader. The pith and marrow of the achievement is stated to be the discovery of the passages corrupted, but the more or less felicitous conjecture by which the passage is to be restored becomes a very inferior consideration, or it is rather inferred that he alone who first suspects the passage of corruption has any chance of restoring it, or that at all events to dispute his emendation can only be the easiest and the dullest of all literary efforts. But he advances in the happy arrogance of his instruction upon this head.

"Yet we have seen editions of this author in which nothing else has been attempted: and we may now predict that nothing else will ever be performed by editors who have spent their time and impaired their sight and intellects in collecting and collating the old quartos."

Perhaps human assurance never proceeded to so great a length. The works of an author, not collected and published by himself, go through the press in his lifetime (as was the case with about half of Shakespeare's plays); some years after the whole are unskilfully printed from playhouse copies, and it is made a high crime and misdemeanour to collect and collate the very copies by which they

can be corrected. But the reason of the anathema is apparent. If there should turn up any clear and obvious confirmation of the very passage suspected by the master critic to be corrupt; if the collation of these unlucky quartos should, even to "impaired sight and intellects," demonstrate that the great poet, and everybody in his day, certainly wrote the very word which the critic discarded on his puny modern knowledge of our language, what then becomes of the fancied rival of Longinus, and all the fame of his conjectural sagacity?

Poor Capell was in truth a critic of another breed. As far as his fortune and his diligence could aid his pursuit, he collected everything relating to his object, and set himself with suitable modesty to learn even his rudiments in the very "school of Shakespeare" — he tracked him in his whole couse of reading, knowing that he invented absolutely neither character, nor sentiment, nor speech, that he lived in the common atmosphere, however distinguished among his contemporaries, and that to know them accurately was the best, nay, only mode of becoming perfectly acquainted with him. It is the perseverance in this course that has replaced in the text of Shakespeare so many expressions discarded by those who were unacquainted with our ancient authors. Capell was an excellent critic, but an indifferent, or rather bad, writer. He seemed to have read the ancients till he ceased to be a modern. He lost his own tongue

without absolutely acquiring theirs, and is often perfectly unintelligible. Figures are said to be perilous things to careless writers; they are not without danger to the gravest. There is sometimes a fashion of commencement in literary essays which seems to be imperious. Doctor Johnson but swells out the initiatory paragraph of Warburton in his own preface to Shakespeare. A simile is thought as essential among these critics as a sentence, and architecture has been permitted to illustrate the genius of Shakespeare. Pope and Theobald are reminded of a Gothic building. Let us attend to the at least animated figure of Capell.

"It is said of the ostrich that she drops her eggs at random, to be disposed of as chance pleases: either brought to maturity by the sun's kindly warmth, or else crushed by beasts and the feet of passers-by. Such, at least, is the account which naturalists have given us of this extraordinary bird; and, admitting it for a truth, she is in this a fit emblem of almost every great genius; they conceive and produce with ease those noble issues of human understanding, but incubation, the dull work of putting them correctly upon paper and afterward publishing, is a task they cannot away with."

The reader sees the total failure of this simile in a moment. A play is at its full maturity when it is given to the stage; the egg is already an ostrich. Committing it to the press is like anything but incubation. If the poet had contented himself with sketching merely his fable and charac-

ters, and leaving these rudiments to be made plays by those who found them, or to perish among the unheeded rubbish of a lumber-room, the ostrich might have illustrated the negligence of a great genius.

But pardon him his simile, and the introduction to his Shakespeare is a very masterly effort. It suggested to Mr. Malone the chronological essay upon his plays, the history of the stage, and also the plan of that life of the poet which my late friend left imperfect; I mean imperfect only because unfinished, for all that we have of it is perfect beyond comparison, and indeed a masterpiece of antiquarian sagacity and the most unwearied research. "Before these efforts of Mr. Malone," as Capell observed, "in all the writings upon Shakespeare, the critic and the essayist swallowed up the biographer, who yet ought to take the lead in them."

I have thought that the unavoidable register of his death was a suitable occasion to record the honours of his literary life; and as that has happened to Capell which seems to be the lot of the laborious, — to be the groundwork of fame to others, — I think it just to refer the reader to the close of his introduction to the works of our great poet for proofs of what is here advanced; he will there see a title to his respect of which the editor cannot be divested, and the farther he continues the inquiry the more he will be sensible of the modest merits of the licenser for the stage.

Macklin, the comedian, was now certainly fourscore and upward; and yet so far from yielding to the pressure of age either upon his personal or mental powers, that he had completed his favourite attack upon Scotland, and determined to produce it upon the London stage, and be himself the representative of the Macsycophants. The first title of his comedy, "The True-born Scotsman," was very properly dropped for one more general, and therefore less offensive, "The Man of the World." As a literary composition it testifies uncommon strength of mind — of a mind which has imbibed the political prejudices of a century and held to them as a freehold. Macklin had heated himself with the subtle and eloquent essays of Bolingbroke, and, like Tom Davies, considered the "Patriot King" and "The Dissertation upon Parties" and the "Remarks on the History of England" as the almost sacred writings of freedom; and when Junius, who thought the same thing, and built himself upon them, endowed the despicable howl of Wilkes's rabble with the refinements of composition, Macklin delighted in the vigour of his periods, and perhaps still more enjoyed the venom which no less distinguished them.

He transferred the hatred borne by his party to the favourite, not merely as Macbeth did to all that traced him in his line, but to all who were born in the same country; and called upon an

English audience to sanction and enjoy his libel upon a people speaking the same language, united in one monarchy, and mixing in fraternal relation with us in every condition of life. To the disgrace of the licenser, it was allowed to be performed on the 10th of May, 1781; and though there were strong objections to many of its sarcasms, and delicacy was often hurt as well as candour, yet the principal character was so masterly, and acted in such a strain of heartfelt enjoyment by the author, that there is no more chance of its ever being lost to the stage than there is for the dismission of Sir Giles Overreach himself, who seems to have suggested to Macklin the mode of best directing the tide of his prejudice against a whole nation. While there is a great actor, Sir Giles will be performed upon the English stage; and, though of a fiercer and more savage temperament than Sir Pertinax, the characters have so much in common that they will usually be acted by the same person, provided the dialect of the latter do not present an insurmountable bar. This it is not likely should often be the case. Great actors are commonly admirable mimics; the dialect may, therefore, be roughly studied among ourselves, and finished with great nicety by one of those visits to the North which the ornaments of the profession so commonly make for the satisfaction of our neighbours and their own advantage. It is well known that the provinces of Scotland speak

dialects differing much among themselves, but the discrimination between them is seldom accurately known to an English ear; perhaps the best rule to an actor is to neglect the nicety and be careful only to speak Scotch; and as the more uncouth anything sounds the more laugh is excited, the broader he speaks the better. Macklin insinuated better than Cooke, but the jovial manner of the latter with Lumbercourt came nearer than Macklin's nature would allow him to come, even in conveying his own intention. They were both excellent and unapproached.

There are few modern productions marked by strong satire and pointed dialogue; and as I believe Macklin's play to be little studied, and followed rather for malicious enjoyment than the proper attractions of the drama, I shall take the liberty to display, at some length, the literary merit it undoubtedly contains, although the work of a man whose youth seemed to promise anything rather than literary distinction.

Who has succeeded the veteran of the stage in the description of the subservient enjoyment of the patron's courtesy or good humour?

"Aw crouding, bustling, and pushing foremost intul the middle of the circle, and there waiting, watching, and striving to catch a look or a smile fra the great mon; which they meet wi' an amicable reesibility of aspect, — a modest cadence of body, and a conciliating coöperation of the whole mon."

Hogarth never exceeded the painting of these finely chosen epithets.

When our Northern adventurer had settled the best means of his advancement to be a matrimonial adventure, and "beauty often struck his een, and played about his heart," when he had resolved to leave it, however, "to prodigals and coxcombs that could afford to pay for it," observe what he sought for in its stead, not from indifference or poverty of taste, but because he resolved to devote himself body and soul to his interest. "I looked out for an ancient, weel-jointured, superannuated dowager; a consumptive, toothless, phtisicky, wealthy widow; or a shrivelled, cadaverous piece of deformity, in the shape of an izzard, or an appersiand, or, in short, ainything, ainything that had the siller."

Here, too, he takes an opportunity to enumerate rapidly the consolatory expedients which fanaticism offers to such neglected commodities in affected purity and spiritual prerogatives. "Now, sir, where do you think I ganged to look for this woman with the siller? Nai tul court, nai tul playhouses or assemblees. Nai, sir. I ganged tul the kirk, tul the Anabaptist, Independent, Bradlonian, and Muggletonian meetings; tul the morning and evening service of churches and chapels of ease, and tul the midnight, melting, conciliating love-feasts of the Methodists."

There he meets with the object of his passion;

and notice, full as he is in his description above of what he sought, how copious he is in his terms, and how little he repeats himself. He meets with a "slighted, antiquated, musty maiden, that was religiously angry with herself and aw the world, and had nai comfort but in metaphysical visions and supernatural deliriums." When he found she had the siller, how happily he paints his conformity with her practice! "I plumpt me down upon my knees, close by her, cheek by jowl. I watcht her motions, handed her tul her chair, waited on her home, got most religiously intimate with her in a week, married her in a fortnight, buried her in a month, toucht the siller."

What follows in the advancement of this systematic votary of fortune is in the same caustic style. Every hearer recognises the truth of the portrait, and admits the character to be contemptible; but as we shrink less from the principles than their avowal, the application of them to our particular objects admits of a thousand varieties, and the course of Macsycophant is often pursued under the mask of a steady prudence, which conceals from others, and sometimes from itself, the value of the sacrifices it is in the habit of making.

I find only one slight indication as to the period of Macklin's life when he commenced this comedy, and that is the song with a line of which his gay nobleman makes his exit, "Sons of care, 'twas

made for you." Doctor Dalton, in the year 1738, I think, brought Milton's "Comus" upon the stage, and the words quoted were then, for the first time, taken from the speech of Comus and set to music. So that it is quite clear it could not have been the work of his youth, unless, as in speaking of the patriarchs, we are to call fifty the youth of Macklin. The scene between Lady Rodolpha and Egerton, which closes his third act, is, however, uncommonly sprightly.

The prejudices of Macklin, I have said, were those of his party. Lawyers, of consequence, are favoured with a double portion of his spleen. It is common to attack the pleader on the ground of his adoption of another man's interest, or what is genteelly styled the indiscriminate defence of right or wrong. The common inference may be that he who is not scrupulous as to the integrity of his client will be utterly regardless as to his own. Macklin represents a learned sergeant as thinking only of his seat in Parliament, and ready to betray his client if the enemy will only return him for the borough. This is vulgar obloquy.

Upon the aid which they unquestionably furnish to the malevolence of our species, Macklin has written a sentence of uncommon force and point:

"Why, my dear lord, it is their interest that aw mankind should be at variance; for disagreement is the very manure with which they enrich and fatten the land of liti-

gation; and as they find that that constantly promotes the best crop, depend upon it, they will be always sure to lay it on as thick as they can."

But he was not disinclined to lash the subserviency of another learned body, the clergy. "Gin you are so very squeamish about bringing a lad and a lass together, or about doing sic a harmless innocent job for your patron, you will never rise in the Church." This is the sentiment of Sir Pertinax, who is supposed to speak from no slight or superficial knowledge of the world. The author, however, has introduced a reverend personage, who feels the useful dignity of his order, and answers the calumniator with striking propriety:

"*Sir Per.* You have been in my service for many years, and I never knew your principles before.

Sid. Sir, you never affronted them before."

There is frequently a gross error in the language of a bad character, namely, that in speaking of his actions he uses the opprobrious terms with which others commonly mark them. This should be strenuously avoided. It is right for a friend to say, "Take care how you get into the clutches of the merciless Sir Pertinax." It is wrong for Macsycophant to speak thus of himself:

"*Sir Per.* The devil a baubee he has in the world, but what comes thro' these clutches."

The veteran has not given all the interest to the scene that was naturally attached to his fable. He has made nothing of Constantia, though there were fine opportunities in the display of virtuous poverty, and a pathos as to the situation of her father which would have elevated the tone of his production. Still, in this case, as in others, it is easier to improve the defective parts of the structure than to conceive or execute the perfect. At the distance of more than forty years from its production, the minds of our dramatic authors have yet produced no character that can stand against Macklin's Sycophant; and his Lady Rodolpha, though but slightly involved in his business, is so happily marked with peculiar humour, that she is equally removed from rivalry among the later candidates for the honours of comedy.

I have noticed the Whiggism of Macklin. It is a little remarkable that his friend Murphy, when he wrote or corrected for him the dedication of his play and farce to Lord Camden in 1792, fell quite naturally into the doctrine of Lord Chatham and Junius. The following paragraph is remarkable for its expression:

"When the Libel Bill was depending in Parliament, I know who was the orator in the cause of the people and the Constitution. By that bill, which, with your lordship's support, has happily passed into a law, I saw it determined that, when a jury is sworn to try the matters in issue, craft

and chicane are no longer to teach twelve men to perjure themselves by resigning the chief part of their duty to the discretion of the court, which has been emphatically called the law of tyrants."

The reader sees the reference here made to the attempt of Lord Mansfield to restrict a jury to the finding of special facts, such as printing and publishing; and that the innuendos, whether of blanks or construction, were properly filled up in the information. Junius had sketched the paragraph for Macklin in the following terms: "But that whether the defendant had committed a crime or not, was no matter of consideration to twelve men, who yet, upon their oaths, were to pronounce their peer guilty or not guilty."

While we are thus apprehensive of the subserviency of the bench, and dread that some unhappy libeller of authority should meet the punishment he has provoked, let us not be indifferent to the reverence which juries may possess for the law, and the facility afforded by a general verdict of acquitting a criminal from the participation of his opinions.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE summer season of the Haymarket Theatre had not produced anything of moment in 1781. That elegant and most accomplished woman, Lady Craven, had, by a modern anecdote, supplied Miles Peter Andrews with the subject of a musical comedy, of which the joke was in the title, the Baron Kinkvervankotsdorsprakengatchdern. Perhaps the château of Cunegonde invited the fair anecdote writer to this attempt; and "Franzel's Love" has been preserved from oblivion by Hayley's delightful "Triumphs of Temper." But Andrews, as a dramatist, could only obtain oblivion through the regions of disgrace. Either alone, or combined with another, he was incessantly before the public as a writer of comedy, opera, or farce. Fashionably connected, he had the usual support of fashion, which pays a first visit of compliment and curiosity, and afterward is equally prepared to enjoy either your triumph or disgrace.

But the dramatic honours of the noble lady just mentioned bloomed only in private theatricals. On the public stage, I think, her "Silver Tankard" did not pass around with great admiration; its

second title, the "Point at Portsmouth," introduced some unlucky associations. It is now forgotten, like her "Sleep-walker," or rather that of Madame du Deffand's friend, Pont de Vesle. The "Miniature Picture," I believe, is remembered most by its having first exercised Sheridan's famous prologue, which, suitable enough to the modern life of Lady Craven's pencil, was for its wit selected to precede the savage horrors of "Pizarro." Colman's season had some permanent novelties, — the "Beggar's Opera" reversed, and a "Medea and Jason à faire rire," with the "Agreeable Surprise" of O'Keefe, destined to a farcical immortality.

In commencing the winter season of 1781–82 it may be necessary to notice with some care the features of the rival management of the two theatres, as a mighty change indeed was at hand, which compensated to one of them all the mischiefs of indifference and idleness. Mr. Sheridan, as a dramatic writer, had opened with remarkable brilliancy. There was in "The Rivals," properly estimated, enough to announce a genius of infinite humour, as well as delicacy. This comedy seems to have started from his personal feelings; Falkland expresses, I have no doubt, the captious alarms of the author's own passion for Miss Linley; and his memorable duel with Mathews, with all its inveterate animosity, by time admitted the play of fancy, and the strong contrast of Sir

Lucius and Acres. The character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger is so happily conceived that one would hardly suppose it could be otherwise than attractive in any hands; yet when Lee acted it in 1775 he absolutely rendered him ridiculous and disgusting. He, however, was happily succeeded by Clinch, who perhaps gave the tone to all the subsequent impersonations. Some judicious curtailments, too, came in aid, — the "ineffectual good qualities" of Mrs. Malaprop became quite efficient, and the audience at length rose to the level of the comedy. "The Duenna" did not oblige them to rise at all; it was calculated to move all ranks with irresistible pleasantry, and situations comic in the highest degree. The author's wit here distinguished him from every existing competitor. Of Isaac Mendoza, who had quitted Judaism six weeks only, he says: "He stands like a dead wall between church and synagogue, or like the blank leaves between the Old and New Testament."

When Jerome had said of his daughter that she had "the family face," Isaac, who has seen the Duenna only, thus pleasantly comments on the expression, aside:

> "Yes, egad, I should have taken it for a family face, and one that has been in the family some time, too."

Father Paul, in the third act, is complimented as looking the very priest of Hymen. He replies,

"In short, I may be called so; for I deal in repentance and mortification." To points such as these, in no scanty measure, may properly be added the very best comic song that the stage has yet heard, — Don Jerome's "O the days when I was young." The mixture of whim and regret in the old voluptuary is quite delightful, —

> "True, at length my vigour's flown,
> I have years to bring decay;
> Few the locks that now I own,
> And the few I have are gray."

"The School for Scandal" and "The Critic" seemed to prove that his powers of every sort were acquiring still higher excellence as they proceeded in their course; but politics, selfish and vulgar and barren as they are, seized and engrossed this genuine son of the muses, and all the hints or fragments of the "Foresters" and "Affectation," a thousand bright ideas that had filled his mind, fled with the passing clouds, and left not a rack behind them.

In the meantime this brilliant light in his theatre, while it rendered other writers alarmed at either the judgment of Sheridan or his rivalry, had such an effect upon the comedians that they almost resembled Shakespeare's jealousy that "mocks the meat it feeds on." Novelty, however essential to them in their personal attraction, had but little of their respect. Who could write but their great master?

However, it became at last sadly certain that his stage could not depend upon Sheridan; and his brother-in-law, Tickell, was tempted to do his best to fill the void. He revived "The Gentle Shepherd" of Allan Ramsay; and although some pains appear to have been taken to restore the genuine Doric, which Theophilus Cibber had translated into his own vulgar tongue, I yet cannot greatly commend the Southern dialect of Drury Lane. The simple beauties of the poem were, however, felt on this occasion, and the lovers of rustic nature were obliged to Mr. Tickell for the restoration of its original language, — the pronunciation, and still more the cadence, suffered, as might be expected, from diffidence and badness of ear. Linley, by skilful accompaniments to the Scottish melodies, showed how usefully science may be occupied on the ground of genius.

On the 17th of November Jephson's "Count of Narbonne" was acted for the first time at Covent Garden Theatre. His friend, the Rt. Hon. Luke Gardiner, honoured him with a prologue, highly philosophical, and of a pure poetical vein. The subject of this play is one of those "removed by sacred time's mysterious hand," and is known to all readers as "The Castle of Otranto," written by Horace Walpole, whom Mr. Gardiner gracefully mentions as neglecting in his retirement the wreaths of fame, —

"And, more than poet, shuns a poet's name."

He bespeaks the favour of the moderns to a Gothic play, on the principle that bids the modern mansion rise not unfrequently with "fretted roof" and "pointed turrets," in imitation of the temples and the castles of our forefathers.

Distance from the subject, he says, is necessary to derive the proper enjoyment from the drama. This position he thus illustrates:

> "What odours the Arabian coasts dispense!
> Which, breath'd too near, o'erpower and pall the sense;
> But if at sea the breeze their sweets exhale,
> Vigour and life ride on the perfum'd gale."

The introduction of the trochee, in the first and third feet of the last line, gives indeed expressive vigour and life to the poetical figure, which suggests its mighty original, Milton:

> "Sabæan odours from the spicy shore
> Of Araby the blest; and, many a league,
> Cheer'd with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles."

The author of the play seems rather to have rejected the peculiar marvellous of the romance than the marvellous altogether; for the address of the countess to her husband seems to imply events of a nature equally surprising. He destroys their son by a Barbary horse instead of a gigantic helmet; but the language of Hortensia points more immediately to the latter species of interference:

"Spectres glide,
Gibbering and pointing as we pass along;
These towers shake round us, though the untroubled air
Stagnates to lethargy."

The features of the Gothic romance never bend to modern philosophy without losing much of their picture power, and all their sublimity. It is true that the stage may be unable to exhibit its terrors adequately; but if a catastrophe be mere matter of narration, a credence of the marvellous is never refused to the seeming earnestness and conviction of the relater. As far, too, as the human passions are concerned, the superstitions of a dark age extenuate in a degree the peculiar atrocities to which they sometimes conduct. All the accompaniments should bear the impress of the century in which we lay the action. The modern spectator, for his own enjoyment, will surrender his knowledge to his imagination, and, with the excellent Collins,

"Hold each strange tale devoutly true."

As Jephson is one of the moderns who may pretend to tragic diction, a few observations upon the language of "The Count of Narbonne" will be expected. He sometimes transfers a happy combination from Shakespeare *sans façon*. Thus we have, at page 9 of his play, "scanted courtesy" from "King Lear;" and, at page 16, the following bold attempt to use the terrific expressions of Gloster's death-bed:

"Methinks I see him,
His ashy hue, his grizzled, bristling hair,
His palms spread wide."

(See the third act of Shakespeare's "Second Part of Henry VI.")

We sometimes perceive the deep impression of a favourite author looking out unconsciously in a passage of a very different kind. The famous soliloquy of Cato has these expressions:

"The soul secured in her existence —
What means this heaviness?"

So in the two following speeches of Jephson's first act:

"*Peasant.* Secure in her integrity my soul —
Count. Away with him — What means this heaviness?"

So sure is this doctrine of association to operate upon composition, felt or unfelt.

He occasionally is verbose and flimsy —

"With downcast eye and sad dejected mien.
Once lighter than the airy wood-nymph's shade."

His highest power, as it excites either awe or sorrow, will be found in the admirable character of Austin. The energy and pathos of Henderson here rendered all rivalry impossible. But the poet had supplied divine materials for the great artist to work up.

"*Count.* You come commission'd from fair Isabel?
Austin. I come commission'd from a greater Power,
The Judge of thee, and Isabel, and all.

. . . . . .

Austin. And think you to excuse
A meditated wrong to excellence,
By giving it acknowledgment and praise?"

The wretched Raymond, the victim of destiny, upon whom is entailed blood shed unrighteously, is for the most part an object of either horror or disgust. The cravings of ambition, and the dread of retribution, make him see even the virtues of others invidiously. His comment upon the inflexible honesty of Austin is admirable sarcasm.

"The virtue of our churchmen, like our wives,
Should be obedient meekness. Proud resistance,
Bandying high looks, a port erect and bold,
Are from the canon of your order, priest.
A front that taunts, a scanning, scornful brow,
Are silent menaces, and blows unstruck."

Raymond hurries at last into satirical invective against the sex, seldom indeed exceeded. The reader will find the passage, which I had rather not quote, because I would not supply arms to the scoffer and the idler.

"The frail and fair make you their oracles," etc.

As an instance of the author's power of painting in language, the Countess Hortensia is thus alluded to:

"And see, the beauteous sorrow moves this way."

But enough as to a writer for whom my respect would have been sufficiently secured by the friendship with which he was honoured by the late Mr. Malone.

When this play was first acted in Dublin it was extremely profitable to Daly ; and Kemble greatly distinguished himself in the count.

At the rival theatre the Crawfords paid similar respect to the muse of Ireland, who superintended the rehearsals, and had the exquisite gratification of occupying both theatres of the capital at the same time. Clinch played the count, and Crawford Theodore. Mrs. Crawford, who should certainly, even from her age, have represented the countess, to the astonishment of everything but dotage, threw away all the advantages of a part most powerfully written, and chose the virgin Adelaide, for the sole object of playing the youthful passion with her husband, the Theodore of the night.

It is not difficult to conceive that a young gentleman may be passionately enamoured of the great talents of a lady of middle age : it is still more easy to imagine the delusion under which the mature female strives to attach, and hopes to retain, the ardour which nature designed for beauty of its own age ; but I must think such matches ill calculated for public display : the charm is known and felt only by the parties ; the disproportion strikes all eyes but their own ; a feeling of shame

is excited in the beholders, which drops into disgust or rises into ridicule. When such exhibitions invade the stage, and the circumstances of the parties are known, the loves of the drama suffer from the absurd reality in the representation.

In London the cast of "The Count of Narbonne" had none of this absurdity. Wroughton was the count, and his matronly countess was Miss Younge. The innocent Adelaide found a delightful representative in Miss Satchell; and Lewis communicated to the seeming peasant, Theodore, the noble bearing of the heir of Clarinsal.

When the author of such a tragedy called upon the theatre for the profits of his three nights, he found them rather more than one hundred and fifty pounds; but if you will be merely poetical, manly, pathetic, and sublime in your writings, is a London audience to blame?

Whatever author produces a strong effect upon the public mind, no matter for the subject, will always find the doors of the playhouse open to a dramatic effort. Pratt, of Bath, who had written under the signature of Courtney Melmoth, in the year 1781, published a poem with the faint title of "Sympathy." The rage for this *chef-d'œuvre* was excessive: so in truth was the sensibility which was the soul of the production. But although admired by Whalley, and Potter, and Hayley, and sanctioned by Beattie (worth all Bath-Easton to-

gether), at a distance of forty years the following lamentation for the loss of Shenstone seems extremely puerile:

"The birds and beasts funereal honours paid,
Mourn'd their lov'd lord and sought the desert shade;
His gayest meads a serious habit wore;
His larks would sing, his lambs would frisk no more."

But all ranks then sympathised with the man who, going to a friend's seat in the country, finds him absent, and lets his heart out in such a flow of the social affections as to find no charm in the scenery which had pleased him most, and with excessive sensibility to feel a temporary absence like a death.

Doctor Johnson has treated with some derision the important axioms of "The Essay on Man." The choice discoveries of Pope are resolved into the talk of the mother and the nurse. But whether it be obvious or not that —

"Whatever is is right" —

there will be less hazard in affirming with Pratt,—

"This then is clear, while human kind exist,
The social principle must still subsist."

It is an old rule in morals to suspect the possessor of ostentatious virtue. This tearful romancer had been in orders and thrown aside his gown; he had also invaded the stage as an actor, and the buskin dropped from him. Sympathy,

however, brought his "Fair Circassian" upon the stage, and it had such a tender interest as Miss Farren was strong enough to give it.

The subject was the "Almoran and Hamet" of Doctor Hawkesworth, a writer formed for the Eastern romance, and emulating the lofty periods of Johnson. I have commonly observed the effect of characters towering above the species, either in virtue or wisdom, cold upon the stage. The highest wisdom is passion subdued or absent. Our interest is excited by the interest of others, and, if we are touched by their passions, we find the text of nature sufficient without the lecture of the philosopher.

It was the practice of Shakespeare to build upon the current tales of romance; but those tales abounded in incident, and were therefore suited to the stage. He could himself work out character, and inform it with passion and with sentiment. As literature rose upon us, a more artful rhetoric embellished our inventions; we became ambitious of swelling thoughts and sounding language. We invented draperies instead of involving man in new or striking circumstances. An allegory offered much to the ear, but little to the eye. For every dramatic purpose the homely fables which diverted the halls of our ancestors far surpass the elegancies of modern narrative.

The object of this slight disquisition is to show that Pratt had in reality to struggle with materials

that seemed at first so captivating, and that incidents more level with humanity would have given him less trouble to dramatise, and have produced infinitely greater effect; it is not, however, intended to affirm that any other dramatist could have surpassed, on this occasion, Mr. Pratt.

In society Pratt was a lecturer and reader of his own productions; full of himself, and coveting that distinction which the French, on juster grounds, bestowed upon l'Abbé de Lille. In English society the separation of the sexes, absurd even to a resemblance of the forest, drove Pratt for the most part to the dowager division of life; and he cherished a general sensibility without distinct objects. Pratt was a delightful man to women whom others had disgusted, or injured, or neglected.

Tickell, on the 13th of December, in pursuance of his design, brought out his opera of "The Carnival." I saw it at the time and considered it amusing, though not striking. Compared with "The Duenna" it was flat, — Lent rather than Carnival.

Music at this time lost more, much more, than "The Carnival," however tuneful, could possibly supply. The learned, the elegant, the tender Bach died on the 21st of January, 1782, and, on the 19th of the March following, that admirable comic singer, Joseph Vernon. The exhilaration of Vernon was peculiar; his look was an invitation to be happy, and his voice, though weak, suf-

ficed to convey the effect of both the words and music of his songs. His style was full of meaning, and he left no pupils that ever reminded you of his excellence. For years he was the delight of the public, and communicated dignity even to the Vauxhall muse.

A principle of association leads me here to notice a severe loss appertaining to a sister art, — painting. The government of the country having had its attention engrossed by a long and unnatural struggle, about this time the magnificent collection of art at Houghton was transferred to the Empress of Russia for the sum of £40,825. It is gratifying to know that so superior is the present condition of this country, that after a war to which that of America was but a prologue, the tragic drama closed upon us with resources so vast that we should have voted the sum in Parliament with acclamation that was to keep such a treasure among us. I shall risk, as a divertissement, a small selection of the greater works, with the prices given for them by the empress.

The Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin, by Guido. (Pope Innocent the XIIIth, after this beautiful picture had been shipped at Civita Vecchia, could hardly be persuaded to permit the vessel to depart.)	£3500
A Holy Family, by Vandyke	1600
The Magdalen Washing the Saviour's Feet, by Rubens	1600

A Seaport and Calm Sea, by Claude	£1200
Four Markets — Fowl, Fish, Fruit, Herbs — by Snyders	1000
Two Flower Pieces, by Van Huysum	1200
Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, by Pietro Cortona	1000
A Holy Family, life size, by Nicolo Poussin	800
Moses Striking the Rock, by the same	900
A Cook Shop, by Teniers	800
Christ Baptised by St. John, by Albano	700
Assumption of the Virgin, by Murillo	700
The Adoration of the Shepherds, by Murillo	600
Bathsheba, by Vanderwerf	700
The Prodigal Son, by Salvator Rosa	700
The Continence of Scipio, by Nicolo Poussin	600
Six Sketches of Triumphal Arches, by Rubens	600
The Wife of Rubens, by Vandyke	600
Charles the First and Henrietta, whole lengths, by Vandyke	400
Judgment of Paris, by Luca Jordano, etc.	500

But it is perfectly distressing to copy the sad detail and to consider at the same time what prices would be given now to recover the pictures.

The best comic efforts of the season were the "Which Is the Man?" of Mrs. Cowley, and "The Walloons" of Mr. Cumberland; but both those agreeable writers had produced much better plays, and they had only a temporary effect:

> "The perfume and suppliance of a minute,
> No more."

"The Maid of the Oaks," reduced to a farce, now was acted at Drury Lane Theatre, and Lady

Bab Lardoon's pleasantries, from the lips of Mrs. Abington, were no vulgar enjoyment. I remember the salt with which she seasoned her fine gentleman's claim to be as loving as sparrows:

"*Lady Bab.* I know you are very loving — of yourselves; ha, ha, ha! You are a sort of birds that flock, but never pair."

The way in which, as Philly Nettletop, she mystified Dupeley, was in truth perfection; but the scene, as Garrick saw from the first, had genuine comedy in every line of it. Burgoyne is the only writer of our country who has done what I think justice to the comic genius of France. "We must turn to France," says he, "to find the graces of Apollo. Art, regularity, elegance, delicacy, touches of sentiment, adapted only to the most polished manners, distinguish their theatre."

Place yourself as you may in the world, there is always an antipodes. While the above *fête champêtre* was cutting down to a farce for Drury, "The London Cuckolds," that detestable oglio by Ravenscroft, was enduring the knife at Covent Garden. The amputation was attended by a decided mortification in the subject, and a speedy death delivered the now polished lord mayoralty of the city from even the chance of a scandalous insult on the 9th of every November.

Although it is not common to register the

attempts made by the actors to strengthen their benefit nights, yet the first appearance of "Don John," the libertine of Corneille and Molière, in the ballet form, was the attraction of Miss Stageldoir at Drury Lane Theatre, on the 10th of May, 1782. This piece is actually of the most ancient class of the drama. It is a genuine mystery or morality. Wickedness suffered to blast the innocence and happiness of others through a life of riot; with a righteous conveyance to hell in the last instance, and at least no visible atonement to the victims of his passions. Rude and inartificial as such a fable is, Don John has been applauded upon every stage in Europe. Gaping wonder shudders at his fate, but perhaps enjoys the triumphs which lead to it.

An attempt was once made to divest the subject of its horrors; but it was for a private exhibition. The elegant Lady Craven, in the summer of 1782, constructed a theatre in the wood behind his lordship's seat at Newbury, and the libertine was thus acted by her young family. Don John is gay and unthinking, not villainous. His wife, Elvira, has an ingenious brother, who becomes the statue to terrify and reclaim the libertine. These *amusements de famille*, however, may be excused if they leave the savage terrors of the drama to public stages and less refined spectators. Her children thus perhaps commenced that love for the stage which

has distinguished them through life. The prologue, written, I believe, by Lady Craven, had a graceful and gentle beauty admirably suited to the occasion.

"No more the hoarse and death-foreboding raven
With croaks disturbs the peaceful house of Craven;
A muse with all a mortal's careless grace
First decks with artful hand this lovely place;
Here fixes all the objects of her love,
And with a smile now consecrates the grove."

Her ladyship had nearly rewritten Molière's "Festin de Pierre," and, however inferior the effort, one is gratified by any approach to the domestic amusements of Ludlow Castle. I may be permitted one incidental remark upon the prevalence in former times of these exhibitions. It was the policy (why should I not call it the virtue?) of our ancestors to make the parental character stand high; to lift it into a grand and reverential position, from which its tenderness and its condescension were felt for the most part to be the true earthly image of the great Parent of all. In high life the lady mother became well decorated with the attributes which poetry had abused upon pagan divinities, and the persons who composed her court joyed to behold her in all the splendours of her rank, receiving the homage of her family, and rewarding with her smile their juvenile attempts for her entertainment. Listen to the expiring feudality

of Milton, for the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield.

> "Mark what radiant state she spreads
> In circle round her shining throne,
> Shooting her beams like silver threads;
> This, this is she alone,
> Sitting like a goddess bright,
> In the centre of her light."

That the poet who had supplied the shades of Harefield and Ludlow with designs so exquisite, and who probably assisted at the festivals among the families of Derby and Bridgewater, could stoop to the vulgar taste of Cromwell, and the mystic ravings of Puritanism, is one of the most difficult problems in the mental science.

At the Haymarket Theatre this season Mr. Colman revived, with the deep interest which formerly attended it, "The Fatal Curiosity" of Lillo. For many years we used to listen to the pathos of his "Barnwell," and imagine its moral effect upon the rising generation; but the times are altered, and men are altered with them; the Barnwells are disclaimed by their fashionable successors, who practise the same vices upon a higher scale, and from other motives. The former drudge of a counting-house has now more time to devote to his amusements, and apes the luxuries of his master. He covets the shooting-box in the country, and the smart vehicle on the road; has little

to impel him but vanity, and his Milwood is the choice of ostentation rather than of passion.

When Lillo brought out his "Fatal Curiosity" in 1736, Fielding was the manager of the "little theatre," whose fortune it has been to have always had managers who knew when genius stood before them. He received Lillo with open arms, promised him the fullest extent of his humble means, wrote a prologue to introduce his play, and gave him all the benefit of his dramatic experience. Of human nature, I am convinced, Lillo was as profound a student as even the author of Tom Jones. A contemporary described him at rehearsal with a valuable minuteness. "Plain and simple as he was in his address, his manner of conversing was modest, affable, and engaging. When invited to give his opinion how a particular sentiment should be uttered by the actor, he expressed himself in the gentlest and most obliging terms, and conveyed instruction and conviction with good nature and good manners."

Two lessons are taught by this play: the one of general, the other of but occasional, importance. The first, "that no human virtue is superior to all temptation;" the other, that "concealment, for a moment even, should not be practised in the presence of poverty and despair." Young Wilmot intended to surprise his parents with his wealth and their deliverance, on awaking from his slumber. They see his opulence, and do not suspect his

affinity; the father uses the very dagger of his son, who just awakes to recognise the person of his murderer.

Such is the terrible interest of "The Fatal Curiosity." I do not wonder that it met with little favour; it is written with a power that sometimes approaches the magic diction of Shakespeare, but for the most contents itself with the weaker purity of Fletcher. The savage nature of the piece is but little calculated for summer amusement. The moral forces need their relaxations as well as the corporeal, and winter only can steel the nerves to the endurance of such severe attacks upon them.

I have seen two great performers of old Wilmot in my time, Bensley and Henderson. The discrimination between them seemed to be this: that the act excited less surprise from Bensley, and the sympathy for him was therefore less; but he was terrible and even sublime. Henderson had our love from his first line, and the distress was perhaps greater that so noble a nature should be thus ensnared to his perdition, and even that the piety and glowing hopes of his virtuous son should become the prey of poverty and desperation. The style of "Fatal Curiosity" is swelling, perhaps, beyond the rank of the characters. Bensley, by his formal declamation, carried this still higher. Henderson's, more level with life, somewhat sunk upon us this error of the author; it still never crept

into prose, but seemed only language forcibly natural.

Lillo, like many other authors, shadows his own nature mysteriously in the characters of his plays. He had a tendency to trick and concealment. He once affected to want to borrow, and yet refused security. His nephew suspected, it is said, his real circumstances, and supplied the humourist upon his own terms; it secured to him the bulk of his uncle's fortune.

About this time Miss Burney, who had deeply interested the reading world by her two novels of "Evelina" and "Cecilia," conceived that the drama was likely to afford her an easy accession of fame and fortune. Her dialogue, as exhibited in her narratives, whether serious or ludicrous, seemed so truly characteristic, and her persons so correctly drawn, that to produce her views of life upon the stage appeared only a more succinct form given to one common power.

But I have remarked that, however excellent the materials which the novelist affords to the dramatic writer, the habit of composing the longer work is somewhat unfriendly to great celebrity in the shorter, and the inventor of the subject does not usually best dress it for the theatre. The habit of expanding a fable through from three to five ample volumes, as it allows character to be gradually unfolded, impresses it with fuller effects; the comedies of the novelist are commonly weak

and heavy; there is too little business and too much conversation, and a very admirable painter of the manners is guilty of an indifferent play.

The dramatic author has only at most five short acts to display all the peculiarities in his characters, however diversified in what our forefathers called their humours. Here he has great aid, it is true, in the admirable skill of his actors, who, from the possession they take of a part, or allow the part to take of them, in the first word they utter convey "a whole history," and by their dress and action place the living being absolutely before you. The fable, however, neither abruptly nor languidly, must be completely developed and concluded in the short compass of eighty or a hundred pages, and yet such is the nature of dramatic effect that frequently, indeed, the last act is lingered out by expedients often perilous, and always tiresome.

Something of this kind, I remember, was observed in "The East Indian," the ground of which was essentially novel and but little dramatic. Miss Burney claims more than the usual notice of a play not eminently successful. An East Indian falls in love with the daughter of his guardian; but, although favoured by the young lady, leaves her on his return to India unfettered by any engagement. The comedy opens with his revisit to this country. In the absence of one lover, a second, it appears, presented himself, a gallant colonel in the service, to advance whose

suit an ingenious friend of his practises a stratagem upon the lovers. The East Indian is told on his arrival that his mistress is going to marry the colonel, and the lady is informed that her nabob is engaged to a rich Eastern temptation. This disingenuous fallacy is completely detected in the third act, and the interest is there completed, though the play continues through two more acts of mere supererogation.

What is extraneous is of the novel cast also,—Savage, a character of morbid sensibility, always ready at the call of benevolence; a poor but proud family, such as her novels had exhibited, and a common plague, in one of those importunate beings who force their advice upon every living thing that comes within their sphere of action. The effect of all this was but weak, though the language of the piece was delightful. Bensley distinguished himself in Savage, and Mrs. Inchbald rather surprised the audience in the performance of the heroine. Curtailments improved its effect, but it never became popular. For once Mr. Colman failed in a prologue. The title of the play was thought to justify the introduction of that jargon which should be confined entirely to Leadenhall Street; but when he talked of "crores of humour and a lack of wit," he forgot that the word crore had no secondary sense to support the pun by which his wit was attended.

The reader may not be displeased to review now

one of those performances which in the winter theatres commonly take place during the summer. I mean those periodical attainments of every possible improvement from the skill of the architect. The theatre, Covent Garden, had, with some slight changes, stood its ground fifty years; the foundations were laid in the year 1729, and as in that period the art magic did not associate itself with architecture, the house was completed in about four years, and opened in 1733 with the opera of "Achilles," written by Gay.

Theatres for a long time retained the form which accident had bestowed upon them, and the temporary stage erected across the entrance part of a common inn-yard, with the wooden galleries on three sides of an area, occupied itself as a pit, taken together, are a rude resemblance of the building which the greatest architects of Europe appropriated to the drama. How it happened that they resisted all the laws of perspective, and buried a great part of the spectators in back seats and angles where it was impossible they should see the stage, I know not. Perhaps Smollett's opinion as to circular buildings might not be singular, though Sterne has laughed at his description of the Pantheon. "'Tis nothing but a huge cockpit," said he. What he does say of it is this: "I was much disappointed at sight of the Pantheon, which, after all that has been said of it, looks like a huge cockpit open at the top. With all my

veneration for the ancients, I cannot see in what the beauty of the rotunda consists. It is no more than a plain, unpierced cylinder, or circular wall, with two fillets and a cornice, having a vaulted roof or cupola open in the centre." A smile is excited by the "no more" of this definition, when it is remembered that simplicity is a leading principle of either beauty or sublimity, and that a multitude of small elaborated parts would have stolen away the "very life of the building." Akenside as a poet had other and perhaps juster notions of this edifice, which, with Agrippa's addition, the noble portico, is now repeating in our capital for "less than gods," and will exhibit London itself in all its magnificent extent.

> "Mark, how the dread Pantheon stands,
> Amid the domes of modern hands:
> Amid the toys of idle state,
> How simply, how severely great!"
> — *Ode to Lord Huntingdon.*

Mr. Harris had determined to rebuild the interior of this theatre, and Richards, who was his principal architect, still keeping on the sides to the straight lines of the old house, threw the front boxes and galleries into segments of circles; and by raising his roof afforded himself an elevation of his seats which restored numbers to the use of their sight as to the amusements of the stage. The architect, however, loaded his fronts with

Corinthian columns and their gilt flutings and ornaments; but, however magnificent these obvious but not necessary supporters, they, in dividing the boxes, intercepted the sight, and the comfort of palpable stability was bought too dearly. Still, when I recall the impression made upon me by this, which was called the New Theatre, Covent Garden, it passes before my mind's eye with a character of solid grandeur.

I well remember the effect of its additional boxes in the situation of the old stage-doors, and that these essential things in the new structure were behind the curtain. The actors seemed to feel embarrassed by the more extended area of the stage. There was no springing off with the established glance at the pit and projected right arm. The actor was obliged to edge away in his retreat toward the far distant wings with somewhat of the tedium, but not all the awkwardness, which is observed in the exits at the Italian Opera.

CHAPTER IX.

THE most important season that the theatre has, perhaps, ever known was that of 1782–83. The winter before Mrs. Siddons had accepted an engagement for three years, and her immense popularity at Bath might have led the proprietors at Drury Lane Theatre to use her name as the herald of their hopes; but their opening turned upon quite a different matter, and the public were invited to applaud the nomination of Mr. King to succeed Mr. Sheridan in the management of the stage.

Garrick, after any occasional absence, had taken the usual license of vanity to imagine what all the ranks of life would think and say upon the return of their idol. He could thus judiciously, however vainly, suggest topics of applause to his admirers, and disarm his enemies by some affected censures of himself and his motives. But Garrick was a mighty power, and the lesson could be safely followed by only similar attraction. King was a very good, but a confined, actor; and, whatever talents he might possess for management, the public was ere long to know, from his own

distinct avowal, that he could neither encourage authors nor engage actors, nor even refresh the dingy fabric of a threadbare suit with a few yards of copper lace.

However, in imitation of his great master, he turned himself to compose an address on the occasion to his audience ; and spoke, awkwardly enough, between the first and second acts of "The Clandestine Marriage," an olio, part parody, part doggerel, of which he was both the subject and the organ. Stage invention is commonly at so low an ebb that hardly any reader requires to be told that the passage selected for parody was the address of Othello to the senators of Venice. But when he arrived at the words in which Othello disclaims the artificial eloquence of the sons of peace, Mr. King's taste was bad enough to venture this wretched substitution :

> " Queer am I in speech,
> And little bless'd with the set phrase of blank verse."

A line which proves that fact to a nicety, being, in truth, no verse at all. It was not so much a trifle (for trifles may be elegant) as vulgar trifling throughout ; but it was applauded even beyond the delightful creation of Lord Ogleby, which followed it, and which King acted with the most consummate skill.

Covent Garden was unlucky in its prelude. Though the prompter and his friend found no

difficulty in proving the comfort and splendour of the new building, yet a club of disappointed authors was too illiberal for human endurance. These truly unhappy persons were of various nations, English, Scotch, Welsh, Irish, and French. With the usual outrageous and fulsome compliment, the Irishman is the only being among them who has either generosity or justice. For once the verdict of the audience spoke in the proper rebuke of this shameless flattery.

The manager of this theatre had not heard with indifference the notice of the appearance at Drury Lane of the great genius of Tragedy. He had engaged Mrs. Yates, who, it was expected, might stand at least in some few characters against the Bath heroine; and he had Miss Younge, admirable either as a first or second in tragedies which displayed two important female parts. He had been some time negotiating with Mrs. Abington, who had quitted the other house because she could not obtain an increase of emoluments amounting to about a thousand pounds during the season. Admirable, it is true, she was, but excessively capricious; and neither manager considered her attraction at this time at all equivalent to the engagement she demanded. Drury Lane had set up Miss Farren as the Lady Teazle in "The School for Scandal," and she acted that character for the first time on the 26th of September, 1782. In either the sparkling vivacity of youth exposing

the foibles of life, fashionable or rustic, or the heart-struck repentance of a generous spirit, alarmed from a dream of delusive, perhaps ruinous indulgence, Mrs. Abington was not hastily to be supplanted. Miss Farren was also the Lady Betty Modish in succession, and for about one-half of her business she was a beautiful and interesting substitute. Time at length restored and new dressed the other half in the person of Mrs. Jordan. Mrs. Bulkeley replaced at Drury Lane much of the comedy in which Miss Younge was so excellent. Her figure allowed her to assume the male habit ; she was a fine dancer and always graceful ; a sensible and even forcible speaker, but she did not charm. When I revive the actresses of that time, I may be allowed to say that she had the most merit among those hastily forgotten. Mrs. Ward, notwithstanding the family name, had no sort of alliance in tragedy to Mrs. Siddons.

From the time that our great tragedian had quitted the metropolis, her professional course had been well directed. Younger, Wilkinson, and Palmer were her managers, and in York the impression she left was highly gratifying to the judicious. I have before me the recollections of a most excellent critic, who preferred at that time her Euphrasia, Alicia, Rosalind, Matilda, and Lady Townley. It may hardly be suspected by the followers of her maturer efforts that one of her most applauded parts at Manchester was the char-

acter of Hamlet. I can imagine that Garrick, when he heard of it, repeated his accustomed "Eh! that's bold. What! Hamlet the Dane?" I do not imagine on our larger stages, upon which the performer walks so much, that Mrs. Siddons was ever desired in that or any other male character; reading the play from the desk does not enable the most intelligent to conceive how the reader acted any one character. Yet I am so thoroughly imbued with a knowledge of the style of this astonishing artist, that I am apt to fancy the effort now before me; and, notwithstanding the consanguinity, see very clearly where and how she would differ from her brother, Mr. Kemble. The conception would be generally bolder and warmer, not so elaborate in speech, nor so systematically graceful in action. Where Horatio and the rest describe the appearance of the spectre, I should think the real feminine alarm at such mysterious seeming would carry up the expression of countenance higher than it has perhaps ever illumined even the powerful features of Kemble. The "Arm'd, say you?" the "I'll watch to-night," with an ardour that sunk the remaining day before it, were probably points amazingly impressive. As she heard a narrative at all times better than one was ever told, so I conceive her breathless attention to the spirit during his disclosure, again benefited by sex itself, would, as before, be transcendent. The famed soliloquy, "To be, or not to be," from the quality

of her organ, would be more like audible rumination than Kemble's, who declaimed it in the higher tones of his voice, and lost the cast of thought that the galleries might catch the words he uttered. Perhaps a few more points might be safely affirmed in her favour, but the unconstrained motion would be wanting for the most part; modesty would be sometimes rather intractable in the male habit, and the conclusion at last might be, "were she but man, she would exceed all that man has ever achieved in Hamlet."

Undoubtedly, Bath was a desirable station to Mrs. Siddons. Till the fashion follows the performer the performer must follow the fashion. Bath is a more select London. But the theatre for some time was sufficiently cool on the nights of its greatest ornament. Tragedy, although the most exalted delight of a refined nature, is seldom sought by those who are merely in search of amusement; when a rage is once excited it is followed, not for its object, but its vogue. Palmer, for a considerable time, troubled Mrs. Siddons only on his Thursday nights, when the cotillion balls carried off everything that could move to the Rooms; and that eye was frequently bent on vacancy that ere long was to fascinate all ranks and ages of life, and number the wisest and noblest of our country, not merely as patrons, but as friends.

On one of these devoted Thursdays accident is said to have conducted into the boxes of the theatre

some persons of consummate taste, and of sufficient consequence to make their opinions heard. A mysterious smile of derision soon announced to the votaries of fashion that a great genius was wasting unequalled talents, without either patronage or praise, among people who call themselves enlightened. Old Mr. Sheridan distinguished himself early in the list of admirers, and asserted, I have no doubt with exact truth, that Mrs. Siddons was more pathetic even than Mrs. Cibber. The prophecy of Henderson, too, was remembered, and the tide of popularity soon flowed in a stream which was never destined to ebb. A few eddies from occasional obstruction, to carry on the figure, hardly merit to be formally remembered.

The Thursday nights, from a vacuum, soon became a plenum; the charms of the cotillion itself were resisted, and no nights at all in the Bath Theatre were attended by the fashionable world but those on which Mrs. Siddons acted. One might have expected that the Bath manager would have felt the full value of his magnet, but he did not. I know from unquestionable authority that a not very considerable increase of salary would have kept her from the metropolis, probably for years, but he could not be induced to make the offer until it was too late. The fact was, seeing herself esteemed, and followed by the first people at Bath, the actress had completely acquiesced in her situation. To London she had a distaste from the

experience of 1776, and nothing but the growing demands of her family at last decided her to remove. She summoned her friends to the theatre, and promised to submit to them her three reasons for quitting them and Bath.

Mrs. Siddons presumes the assembly to feel some astonishment that she should address them in verse of her own, — she who had until then "only with decency repeated the verses of others," — and fancies a considerable curiosity excited as to the object of her composition. She disclaims all vanity on this occasion, and mentions gratitude as the real inspirer of her poetry. At length her reasons for removal are displayed in the interesting forms of her three children.

> "These are the moles that heave me from your side,
> Where I was rooted, where I could have died."

The elegant speaker, their mother, is still living; but, reversing the order of existence, the children are no more; the two sisters but just matured the happiest and most delightful persons, and then dropped from the polished sphere in which they moved; their brother survived them many years, and has left a family, who, I hope, possess the good qualities of their father. The elder sister was a musician of considerable science, and I seem at this moment to listen again to one of her compositions from Cowley.

At the opening of the season Mr. King, in addi-

tion to his olio, acted his best characters with sufficient applause, but I never knew but one rage after any performer of comedy. Mrs. Jordan alone filled her houses almost to fever heat. King therefore brought forward his great strength early in the season, and Mrs. Siddons acted "Isabella" for the first time in London on the 10th of October, 1782, — that play had not been performed at Drury Lane for the last four years.

It may be proper to gratify curiosity with the cast of the play, — not because it was excellent, for it was extremely commonplace in all but one character, the Villeroy of Palmer. Biron, Smith; the count, Packer; Carlos, Farren; Belford, R. Palmer; Sampson, Wrighten; the nurse, Mrs. Love. The afterpiece was "A Trip to Scotland," in which Parsons was the Griskin, and Mrs. Brereton supported the train of her future sister-in-law as Miss Griskin.

At the other theatre it was conceived that the tragedy of the new actress was best met by tragedy, and Voltaire's "Zara" was acted on the same night, the heroine by Miss Younge; Lusignan, Henderson; Osman, for the first time, by Wroughton. But the manager had no inducement to repeat it.

As the person of our great actress has undergone some change, and her features by time became stronger, I should find it difficult now to describe her accurately by memory as she stood

before the audience on the night of the 10th of October. I am relieved from this difficulty by an account of her written at the time. I shall change only a few of the expressions then used, more from a feeling as to composition than alteration as to sentiment.

"There never, perhaps, was a better stage figure than that of Mrs. Siddons. Her height was above the middle size, but not at all inclined to the *embonpoint*. There is, notwithstanding, nothing sharp or angular in the frame; there is sufficient muscle to bestow a roundness upon the limbs, and her attitudes are, therefore, distinguished equally by energy and grace. The symmetry of her person is exact and captivating. Her face is peculiarly happy, the features being finely formed, though strong, and never for an instant seeming overcharged, like the Italian faces, nor coarse and unfeminine under whatever impulse. On the contrary, it is so thoroughly harmonised when quiescent, and so expressive when impassioned, that most people think her more beautiful than she is. So great, too, is the flexibility of her countenance, that the rapid transitions of passion are given with a variety and effect that never tire upon the eye. Her voice is naturally plaintive, and a tender melancholy in her level speaking denotes a being devoted to tragedy; yet this seemingly settled quality of voice becomes at will sonorous or piercing, overwhelms with rage, or, in its wild shriek, absolutely harrows up the soul. Her sorrow, too, is never childish; her lamentation has a dignity which belongs, I think, to no other woman; it claims your respect along with your tears. Her eye is brilliant and varying like the diamond; it is singularly well placed; 'it pries,' in Shakespeare's language, 'through the portal of the head,' and has every aid from brows flexible beyond all female parallel,

contracting to disdain, or dilating with the emotions of sympathy or pity or anguish. Her memory is tenacious and exact, her articulation clear and distinct, her pronunciation systematic and refined.

"Nor has Nature been partially bountiful, — she has endowed her with a quickness of conception and a strength of understanding equal to the proper use of such extraordinary gifts. So entirely is she mistress of herself, so collected, and so determined in gestures, tone, and manner, that she seldom errs, like other actors, because she doubts her power of comprehension. She studies her author attentively, conceives justly, and describes with a firm consciousness of propriety. She is sparing in her action, because English nature does not act much, but it is always proper, picturesque, graceful, and dignified; it arises immediately from the sentiments and feeling, and is not seen to prepare itself before it begins. No studied trick or start can be predicted; no forced tremulation of the figure, where the vacancy of the eye declares the absence of passion, can be seen; no laborious strainings at false climax, in which the tired voice reiterates one high tone beyond which it cannot reach, is ever heard; no artificial heaving of the breasts, so disgusting when the affectation is perceptible; none of those arts by which the actress is seen, and not the character, can be found in Mrs. Siddons. So natural are her gradations and transitions, so classical and correct her speech and deportment, and so intensely interesting her voice, form, and features, that there is no conveying an idea of the pleasure she communicates by words. She must be seen to be known. What is still more delightful, she is an original; she copies no one, living or dead, but acts from Nature and herself."

More than forty years had elapsed since the above general character of the actress was written ;

but after the utmost attention, and a long experience of her genius, becoming grander in its energies as Shakespeare called them forth, I consider the preceding to be a just portrait of her upon her return to that stage in 1782, which six years before had relinquished her assistance, and had seen nothing that approached the established merits of Mrs. Yates and Miss Younge. A respect for the discernment of eminent men may tempt one to the opinion that her excellencies had expanded greatly in the interval; but it should steadily be kept in view that Henderson had either prophetically pierced the veil of time, or she was very early indeed the prodigy that she was subsequently allowed to have become.

Let us, however, avoid decision upon this question, and examine what she displayed in 1782 as the representative of Southern's enchanting Isabella. Time had bestowed the tender dignity of the mother upon her beauty. As she came upon the stage with her son, followed by Villeroy, though desirous to avoid his suit, her step was considerate, and her head declined slightly, her eye resting upon her son. The first impression having been deeply made by her exterior, the audience was soon struck by the melancholy sweetness with which the following exquisite passage came upon the ear — referring to Biron:

> "O, I have heard all this;
> But must no more: the charmer is no more.

My buried husband rises in the face
Of my dear boy, and chides me for my stay.
Canst thou forgive me, child?"

And her fair admirers were in tears as she questioned her son. No art ever surpassed the perfect cadence of the next allusion to him:

"Sorrow will overtake thy steps too soon;
I should not hasten it."

The passing bitterness of reflection upon her own state produced, as it subsided, a moral sympathy with others. As she knocks at the door of her father-in-law, the following general remark reproves the degeneracy of the heart:

"Where is the charity that used to stand,
In our forefathers' hospitable days,
At great men's doors,
Like the good angel of the family,
With open arms taking the needy in,
To feed and clothe, to comfort and relieve them?"

Southern had read Shakespeare with a soul perhaps as tender as his own. Lear in the same way, in his own miseries, remembers the sufferings of others:

"Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of the pitiless storm," etc.

"Take physick, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel."

The interview with Count Baldwin, that chalky sideling personage, old Packer, was a good deal hurt by his insipid manner; but when he consents to provide for the child, on the condition that his mother never visits him, Mrs. Siddons burst forth with the peculiar wildness of a mother's impatience, and the whole house told her that she was irresistible.

"What! take him from me? —
No, we must never part; I live but in my child."

The second act of "Isabella" is a masterpiece of growing interest. Isabella, hopeless as to relief, discovered ruminating upon her fate, and her child at play, unconscious of the pang which he excites. The two servants who had given her access to Baldwin sent to diminish her resources, or rather to starve with her — creditors pressing for payment — Villeroy generously engaging to satisfy their demands — the villain Carlos, urging her obligations to Villeroy and working her ruin through her gratitude — the melancholy consent to take a second husband — altogether compose an act so thoroughly in nature, and so powerfully written, that if Dryden, in his old age, really felt that truth in the drama which he had himself in vain attempted through life, he must have placed Southern, as the poet of the heart, greatly before all his contemporaries.[1] The scenes of

[1] On the authority of Mr. Fox, I call this power the highest excellence. But if it be, as I think it is, a position extended

trifling comedy by which he had disgraced his play were expunged by Mr. Garrick in the year 1758, and so easily were they removed from all the noble interest that they resembled a series of miserable and ludicrous prints placed by a child in some work of genius, and shaken out by the first reader who discovers the pollution. Southern, when he addressed his patron, Hammond, told him that the comedy in it was not essential; that it was against his own opinion, and merely complied with the taste of the town; for, said he, "I think every reasonable man will and ought to govern in the pleasures he pays for." The results of such a principle we are now enjoying to an extent that only accuses the reasonable quality of the public. At its first appearance, through three acts of the play, the gaiety of Mrs. Bracegirdle might divide the house with Mrs.

truly to the epic poet — as to the dramatic — there can be no doubt whatever; it is the heart of his mystery; and even character is less essential than pathos in the composition of tragedy. Mr. Fox thus expresses himself, in a letter to G. Wakefield, dated 13th April, 1801: "The verses you refer to in the fifth Æneid are indeed delightful; indeed I think that sort of pathetic is Virgil's great excellence in the Æneid, and that in that way he surpasses all other poets of every age and nation, except, perhaps (and only perhaps), Shakespeare. It is on that account that I rank him so very high; for surely to excel in that style which speaks to the heart is the greatest of all excellence."

Mr. Fox's politics I must leave to his party. But his mind had a purity, a tenderness, a taste beyond all such feeling; they ennobled the species, and were loved wherever they were known.

Barry. Betterton was her Villeroy, not her Biron. To return, however, to an Isabella greater than Mrs. Barry.

When I said that the second act of this play was perfect, I apply the term beyond the composition to the actress; she threw infinite variety into its hurry of emotion, I remember the following passages with delight:

> "To find out hope, and only meet despair;
> His little sports have taken up his thoughts."

Who besides her ever so spoke of play in the accents of wretchedness?

> "Thinking will make me mad: why must I think,
> When no thought brings me comfort?"

On the arrival of the creditors the answer to the nurse's earnest inquiry, "What will you do, madam?"

> "Do! nothing."

And on the noise increasing, —

> "Hark, they are coming! Let the torrent roar;
> It can but overwhelm me in its fall."

He who remembers that word "nothing," as Laertes has it, "so much more than matter," and recollects the position her eyebrows assumed, the action of her right arm, and the energy of her tone in the passage, "Let the torrent roar," may be

assured that the greatest of tragedians then stood before him.

But less obtrusive, and yet of equal excellence, was the delicate alarm lest her devoted attachment to Biron should be undermined by virtues so essential to her safety, and even in her consent to become the wife of Villeroy entering a sort of protest against his best hopes; all this was given in so soothing a strain; the glance at the child to determine the sacrifice, and the final ratification with its graceful compliment, demanded and received every human accomplishment to do justice to the poet:

> "I give you all, —
> My hand; and would I had a heart to give!
> But, if it ever can return again,
> 'Tis wholly yours."

The reader sees from the simplicity of the terms used — the common parlance of life — how essential it was that they should be sustained by a measured dignity of utterance, and a languid sensibility in deportment and expression.

The third act is a weak one, for Isabella has nothing to do in it but to sit and hear the epithalamium at an entertainment given by her husband in the exultation of his heart. In the second act Isabella had conditioned that she should not change the colour of her apparel. Villeroy gratefully perceives that she is in white when she enters the saloon, —

"*Isa.* Black might be ominous;
I would not bring ill-luck along with me."

Mrs. Siddons spoke this so as to conceal the absolute vulgarity of the notion and the expression of it. She affected this by calling upon that heaviness of the heart which could not be dispelled by any external change. Unlike Iphigenia, she seemed a conscious sacrifice.

In this scene of mere dumb show her deportment was inimitable. She closed the act with a melancholy foreboding that hung like night about her. A melancholy, which she calls sudden, "bakes her blood," and, as Shakespeare continues, makes it heavy, thick, — her "mind, her harassed mind, is weary."

Man is always striving to anticipate the future, and selects his indications sometimes from external nature, sometimes from the peculiar sadness or hilarity of his present feeling. Shakespeare, the interpreter of his kind, has given us both. In Romeo a deceiving spirit "lifts him above the earth" on the eve of his greatest disaster, — unwonted gloom precedes the anguish of Isabella.

With the fourth act of the play Biron arrives from his captivity. There is a beautiful use made by Southern of the tokens interchanged by lovers. The importance of a ring is heightened with wonderful dexterity. In her greatest poverty, Isabella pulls from her finger one that Biron had given to her; it is all that remains of value in her

possession, and she parts with it to sustain life, which only can be dearer. Her husband, arriving late, sends up to her the corresponding token, which cannot fail on every ground to excite the strongest emotion. It operates like a spell upon her.

"*Isa.* I've heard of witches," etc.
"Now I believe all possible. This ring,
This little ring, with necromantic force,
Has rais'd the ghost of pleasure to my fears;
Conjur'd the sense of honour, and of love,
Into such shapes, — they fright me from myself."

The diminutive becoming mighty, as she gave the word "little," followed by "such shapes," spoken with horrors teeming in the fancy, made the hearer start with an undefined perturbation:

"Biron died, —
Died to my loss at Candy; there's my hope. —
O, do I live to hope that he died there?"

This jealousy of affection plunged into circumstances so disastrous, even as to a sentiment that dishonours the ruling passion, was delivered by Mrs. Siddons, as it was written by the author, with pathos that will never be excelled.

I wish it were in the power of the painter to fix every change of that living picture upon the canvas! — the courtesy while she cautiously examined the supposed stranger; the joy to observe no trace of Biron; the recognition of him; the stupor that

weighed upon her countenance, while she sobbed out the mysterious communications previous to his retiring; the manner in which she occupied the stage during that dreadful soliloquy; Biron's return; the still more alarming exclamations of his wife till she leaves him in despair.

Everything here had a truth of tone and look and gesture to which all that I have ever seen in female art bore no comparison whatever. But until then so noble a figure and a countenance so expressive never stood before me.

The last act has some admirable contrivances of the poet, — Isabella's distraction, attempt upon the life of Biron, Villeroy's return, the death of Biron, the full detection of Carlos, the raving of Isabella, and her death. But the laugh when she plunges the dagger into her bosom seemed to electrify the audience; and literally the greater part of the spectators were too ill themselves to use their hands in her applause. It was perfectly clear to those who had seen this great woman at Bath that she came to London, as Garrick's enemy, Quin, expressed himself, to found a new religion; and she came with the full inspiration of the Muse. She struck even prejudice with astonishment from the number of her requisites. So full a measure had never yet fallen to the lot of any one daughter of the stage. Mrs. Yates was majestic, Mrs. Crawford pathetic, Miss Younge enthusiastic; the voice of the first was

melodious, that of the second harsh, that of the third tremulous. As to features, Mrs. Yates was after the antique, but she had little flexibility; Mrs. Crawford was even handsome, but the expression of her countenance was rather satirical; of Miss Younge, the features wanted prominence and relief, and the eye had little colour. Yet sensibility impressed her countenance, and lifted plainness into consequence and interest. In the style of action they differed considerably. Mrs. Yates studied to be graceful; Mrs. Crawford was vehement, and threw her arms out from side to side, struck the bosom with violence in the bursts of passion, and took all fair advantages of her personal attractions; Miss Younge had acquired the temperance in action which Shakespeare recommends, and in every motion was correct and refined, delicate and persuasive. Their rival had all that was valuable in their respective requisites, and more than all; her mental power seemed to be of a firmer texture, her studies to have been deeper, and partaking less of what may be termed professional habits. The eye of Mrs. Siddons was an inestimable distinction; no rival could pretend to look like her.

It is much to possess such an artist in any department of art. The public at large is refined by it. In the present case a fashion was excited that drew the attention of our higher orders particularly to the stage. As we are so constituted

as to be purified by terror and by pity, a great moral object was gained by stealing, through even their amusements, upon the hearts of the fairest portion of the species; and there where affluence had rendered many of the cares of life no subjects of either burden or thought, to banish the apathy engendered by pride, and bring the best fruits of the virtues from the sympathy with fictitious sorrow. I think that this deep impression was then made in the female bosom, and that it was no delusion which led me to notice in the loveliest faces in the world a strongly marked sensibility, derived from the enjoyment of this fascinating actress. What our great observer had noticed in the case of Percy was now repeated. Mrs. Siddons became the glass "in which our noble youth did dress themselves;" and those who frequented her exhibitions became related to her look, to her deportment, and her utterance; the lowest point of imitation, that of the dress, was early, and wisely too, adopted; for it was at all times the praise of Mrs. Siddons to be exquisitely chaste and dignified in her exterior — *simplex munditiis.*[1]

[1] In a work of fiction, of which the sensibility has never been exceeded, Madame de Staël Holstein, in the person of her heroine, has left her own impressions from a performance of Isabella by Mrs. Siddons. It is every way valuable, but must be read in her own language.

"La noble figure et la profonde sensibilité de l'actrice captivèrent tellement l'attention de Corinne, que pendant les premiers actes ses yeux ne se détournèrent pas du théâtre. La déclama-

There is often a singular coincidence in the production of excellence. Minds of peculiar power appear in clusters, — the eloquence of the state was now as greatly distinguished as that of the stage. At the time that Mrs. Siddons quitted Cheltenham, her summer circuit, to delight the metropolis with her talent, William Pitt quitted the circuit, the law courts, and his chambers in Lincoln's Inn, to become at three and twenty his Majesty's chancellor of the exchequer, and to

tion anglaise est plus propre qu'aucune autre à remuer l'âme, quand un beau talent en fait sentir la force et l'originalité. Il y a moins d'art, moins de convenu qu'en France; l'impression qu'elle produit est plus immédiate; le désespoir veritable s'exprimerait ainsi; et la nature des pièces et le genre de la versification plaçant l'art dramatique à moins de distance de la vie réelle, l'effet qu'il produit est plus déchirant.

" En Angleterre on peut tout risquer, si la nature l'inspire. Ces longs gémissements, qui paraissent ridicules quand on les raconte, font tressaillir quand on les entend. L'actrice la plus noble dans ses manières, Madame Siddons, ne perd rien de sa dignité quand elle se prosterne contre terre. Il n'y a rien qui ne puisse être admirable, quand une émotion intime y entraîne.

. . . . . .

" Enfin il arriva ce moment terrible où Isabelle, s'étant échappée des mains des femmes qui veulent l'empêcher de se tuer, rit, en se donnant un coup de poignard, de l'inutilité de leurs efforts. Ce rire du désespoir est l'effet le plus difficile et le plus remarquable que le jeu dramatique puisse produire; il émeut bien plus que les larmes; cette amère ironie du malheur est son expression la plus déchirante. Qu'elle est terrible, la souffrance du cœur, quand elle inspire une si barbare joie, quand elle donne, à l'aspect de son propre sang, le contentement féroce d'un sauvage ennemi qui se serait vengé ! "

amaze, by the splendour of his eloquence, a senate already possessing Fox and Burke. The character of his oratory was of a lofty stamp, and he considered the business of the state as an object of the deepest interest, and the situation of the country as calling for the gravest consideration. The nation had long struggled with the mischievous contest in America; and a House of Commons which had pledged itself never to abandon the right of the mother country to legislate for the colonies had now compelled an unsuccessful ministry to propose the peace of independence to refractory subjects. On every view such a subject might be supposed to press deeply upon the hearts and heads of all who felt for their country; and something in a well-born mind might suggest a melancholy sympathy with a sovereign who was thus to relinquish no mean ornament of his crown. Mr. Pitt having carried his favourite measure of conciliation, the House had addressed his Majesty upon that part of the royal speech which announced that "provisional articles of peace with the American colonies were actually agreed upon;" and the report of that address was brought up. It was at such a moment that Mr. Burke exerted all the powers of his wit to turn the speech of the sovereign into ridicule; and, by breathing freely his vein of sarcastic humour, he kept the House long in continued laughter. But, while he accused Lord Shelburne of duplicity and delusion, he

affected to give the most liberal assent to the virtue, integrity, and honour of Mr. Pitt. The youthful minister rose with the feeling that became him, and hushed the volatile temper of the House into attention "still as night," while he read a lecture of decorum to the veteran orator; and, what Fénélon never imagined, Telemachus was seen reproving the indiscretion of Mentor.

He said the present was a moment for seriousness and not for mirth. The gay flowers of a brilliant and exuberant fancy were proper for their season, — the hours of recreation and conviviality. He should be happy to share in the delights of that fertile imagination which had so long been the wonder and the pleasure of the House; but he could not indulge himself in admiring the beautiful "motes which people the sunbeam" when his mind was occupied with objects so serious and important as those before the House. It was only in circles of amusement that it became men to give a loose to their imagination, and abstract their minds from all business and reflection. He rose, therefore, to bring back the House to sobriety and seriousness, and to tell them that this was neither a fit time, nor the present a proper subject, for the exhibition of a gaudy fancy or the wanton blandishments of theatrical enchantment; it was their duty to break the magician's wand; to dispel the cloud, beautiful as it was, which had been thrown over their heads; and to

consider solemnly and gravely the very perilous situation of the country; and by the force of their united wisdom, abilities, and experience, endeavour to extricate the nation from its difficulties by the restoration of an honourable peace.

That the honourable gentleman's character of the speech from the throne would be admitted by the House he could not believe; because he could not believe that they would consent to call that speech "a farrago of hypocrisies and absurdities," which they had unanimously approved, and for which they had, without a single dissentient voice, agreed to present his Majesty with an address of thanks. That his Majesty's serious admonitions to his Parliament should be branded with such epithets; that his feelings on so affecting a subject as the dismemberment of his empire should be outraged; that his speech, delivered with all the sacredness of royalty, should be charged with mockery, hypocrisy, and even profaneness, were things which he did not expect to hear, and which nothing could excuse but the circumstance of their being the overflowings of a mind, the richness of whose wit was unchecked, for the time, by its wisdom.[1]

[1] The urbanity, the academic purity of this lesson, and many others, were not overlooked by his late Majesty; in every sense a most accomplished gentleman. The venerable biographer of Mr. Pitt has preserved the king's notice of the reform threatened in the tone of debate by his minister. These are his Majesty's own words: "I cannot conclude without expressing

Upon the perusal of this astonishing rebuke, thus bursting from indignant youth upon the head of an intemperate but experienced senator, it is quite impossible to resist the apposite illustration supplied by the "Paradise Lost:"

> "So spake the Cherub, and his grave rebuke,
> Severe in youthful beauty, added grace
> Invincible: abasht the [Rebel] stood,
> And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
> Virtue in her shape how lovely — saw, and pin'd
> His loss; but chiefly to find here observ'd
> His lustre visibly impair'd; yet seem'd
> Undaunted." — Book iv. l. 845.

"I was present," says the excellent Bishop Tomline, "when this speech was delivered, and nothing could exceed the applause with which it was received by the House."

Perhaps the habitual contempt of Mr. Burke's expression struggled with some transient feeling of shame at being thus loudly called upon to hear and feel the sense of his indecorum. When the recollections of forty years present to me the caustic bitterness with which Mr. Burke adopted the tone of his party, which the milder and more

my fullest approbation of the conduct of Mr. Pitt on Monday; in particular his employing a razor against his antagonists, and never condescending to run into that rudeness which, though common in that House, certainly never becomes a gentleman. If he proceeds in this mode of oratory he will bring debates into a shape more creditable; and correct that, as well as, I trust, many other evils, which time and temper only can effect.

generous nature of Mr. Fox always avoided; when I think of his savage exultations at national calamity and personal infliction, it is difficult to find a perfect atonement, even in the strenuous efforts of an almost oracular wisdom to denounce and defeat the impending atrocities of the French Revolution.

As to Mr. Pitt, it may be scarcely fanciful to suppose that, in addition to the weighty subject of his deliberation, some sober and dignified impression had sunk into his mind from the recent efforts of our transcendent actress, — that in such a disposition the severer Muse aided the youthful debater, and thus led to the correction of a vulgar ribaldry, equally unbecoming the place, the occasion, and the exalted talents of the orator. Mr. Pitt was one of the earliest and most sincere admirers of Mrs. Siddons.

CHAPTER X.

BETWEEN the 10th of October and the 30th Mrs. Siddons repeated Isabella eight times, and it became obvious that in gentle domestic woe she had no rival. It was judicious in the management to put her next upon the display of the heroic attributes, which equally distinguished her; and in many respects Euphrasia, in Murphy's "Grecian Daughter," was worthy of her skill. On the 30th of October, therefore, she assumed the graces of filial piety, and met the full impression which Mrs. Barry had left in a part calculated for her powers, and to which her husband had added the support of an Evander not to be surpassed. But old Mr. Sheridan entertained no doubt as to the result, and Murphy, with all the natural partialities of his country, opened his heart to one capable of extending his fame.

I have not yielded to that ungenerous criticism which, even in its tears, denied the palm of tragedy to Murphy. He is at times inflated and unnatural, as when, at the close of his first act, he makes even Euphrasia utter the rant which follows:

"This arm shall do a deed,
For Heav'n and earth — for men and gods to wonder at!"

Such a boast was unworthy of Euphrasia's virtue; and the author might have seen that, whatever this deed should be, the gods were little likely to wonder at what, under any system of mythology, they are presumed to inspire.

What would Murphy have thought, when himself acting the part of Jaffier in "Venice Preserved," if some popular Belvidera had determined to secure a thunder of applause; and, instead of allowing him the high appeal set down for her husband, had exclaimed with all the modesty of Euphrasia:

"Hear this, ye heavens! and wonder how ye made me!"

One great difficulty his fable imposed upon him, — preventing, I mean, the kind of sustenance which Euphrasia bore unperceived to her father from becoming ludicrous, — it could never have been shown in action; yet it must be known, it must be described, and the language must be so cautious as to throw a transparent veil over what it declares. He prepares the incident even in his first act.

"*Euph.* Yes, Phocion, go;
Go with my child, torn from this matron breast —
This breast that still should yield its nurture to him."

He has thus, by a happy line, invested her with the unquestioned power to relieve him; that relief is thus exhibited by Philotas:

"On the bare earth
Evander lies; and as his languid pow'rs
Imbibe with eager thirst the kind refreshment,
Euphrasia views him with the tend'rest glance,
Even as a mother doating on her child."

Nor is the comment on the deed inferior in delicacy to its description:

"All her laws
Inverted quite, great nature triumphs still!"

I shall at least imitate the discretion of the poet, and leave the reader to surmise the terms, which, had they been different, would have ruined the pathos of the scene, and perhaps excited laughter.

Murphy had no great stock of tragic expression, and refused nothing, therefore, that could bestow either grace, or tenderness, or beauty. When Euphrasia talks of her delighted task to tend her father, — to smooth the pillow of declining age, watch every look, explore the unutterable wish, — the poet but copies the tender duties of Pope from the prologue to the "Satires."

"Me let the tender office long engage,
To rock the cradle of reposing age,
Explore the thought — explain the asking eye."

He even copies Tate, where Tate has condescended to improve Shakespeare — in "King Lear," for instance; but the passages shall sleep undisturbed.

As to the charming representative of Euphrasia, some surprise was expressed upon her entrance. She was a perfectly different being from herself in Isabella. The settled sorrow that weighed down the wife, the presumed widow of Biron, had given place to a mental and personal elasticity obviously capable of efforts "above heroic." Hope seemed to brighten her crest and duty to nerve her arm. She had parted with her husband and her child upon the seashore, — the filial impulse had been triumphant, in the cause of her aged father she came now to perish or to conquer.

The person of Mrs. Siddons rather courted the regal attire, and her beauty became more vivid from the decorations of her rank. The commanding height and powerful action of her figure, though always feminine, seemed to tower beyond her sex. Till this night we had not heard the full extent, nor much of the quality of her voice. An opportunity occurred, even in the first act, to throw out some of its most striking tones. In a scene of hypocrisy the usurper Dionysius had assured her of Evander's health, and that the evening of his days should pass in tranquillity and honour. The next instant unfolds the real truth to her, that he is perishing for want of sustenance. The audience trembled when, in a voice that never broke nor faltered in its climax, she thus to earth and heaven denounced the tyrant :

" Shall he not tremble when a daughter comes,
Wild with her griefs, and terrible with wrongs?
The man of blood shall hear me! — Yes, my voice
Shall mount aloft upon the whirlwind's wing."

In the following act a passage occurs still more calculated for effect, which impressed the picture sense of the fancy as if the image described actually stood before you. Euphrasia suspects Evander to have been murdered, and is counselled by Philotas to restrain her frantic grief and retire at that season of repose.

" *Euph.* And dost thou then, inhuman that thou art,
Advise a wretch like me to know repose?
This is my last abode; these caves, these rocks,
Shall ring for ever with Euphrasia's wrongs;
Here will I dwell, and rave, and shriek, and giving
These scatter'd locks to all the passing winds,
Stand on the cliff in madness and despair!"

The power of the pencil lost this momentary sublimity, — Hamilton's Euphrasia is not even Mrs. Siddons at any moment, — this was out of his daring, and Lawrence was then in the elements of art, but an admirable scholar.

Much of Euphrasia is, however, but splendid pantomime, and I need not say how finely everything of this kind was done by Mrs. Siddons. But in this character she had an opportunity to throw out that collected and dignified contempt, in the expression of which her mind combined with her

features to baffle the most ardent fancy. It is of all our emotions that I think the most suited to her countenance, — I should name it as unattainable by any but her own. The passage is in the fourth act, where Dionysius requires her to draw off her husband, Phocion, and his powers, from the siege, to which she replies:

> "Think'st thou then
> So meanly of my Phocion? Dost thou deem him
> Poorly wound up to a mere fit of valour,
> To melt away in a weak woman's tear?
> Oh, thou dost little know him!"

At the last line there is a triumphant hurry and enjoyment in her scorn, which the audience caught as electrical, and applauded in rapture for at least a minute. I am aware, referring to personal character, how erroneous in many instances the inference would be from the powers of the actress to the actual possession of such qualities in the woman. Her spectators here inferred, at least, that all was not seeming, and that in any signal crisis of her own life she would be found indeed the noble creature she appeared to be upon the stage.

In the progressive business of the play, extremely well planned by Murphy, nothing to the silent observer was more beautiful or interesting than the look of Mrs. Siddons when Philotas enters, who is ordered to bring Evander before

the tyrant, — her suspicion of his falsehood brightening up into grateful love, as he invents the tale of his death and the disposal of the body, were among the most intellectual displays of her art. In the important moment when Dionysius, rushing upon her father, is stopped by Euphrasia's dagger, —

> "A daughter's arm, fell monster, strikes the blow!
> Yes, first she strikes — an injured daughter's arm
> Sends thee devoted to the infernal gods!" —

compared with any other effort, I can only say that there appeared now more soul in the purpose, more nerve in the blow.

Again, as on a former occasion, I think anybody but the heroine herself should have exclaimed to Phocion :

> "Lo! there the wonders of Euphrasia's arm."

It is too much in the spirit of Virgil's mighty Amazon :

> "Advenit qui vestra dies, muliebribus armis,
> Verba redargueret: nomen tamen haud leve patrum
> Manibus hoc referes, telo cecidisse Camillæ."

> "Lo! by a woman's arm, this fatal hour
> Thy boast is answered, and thy vaunts no more!
> Go! let thy sire the glorious tidings know;
> Camilla sent thee to the shades below."
>
> — *Pitt. Æn. XI.* v. 687.

Capable under an impulse of despair of striking even a mortal blow, the pious daughter, the tender wife and mother, should recoil from blood; exultation is for tougher natures. Death upon the stage is supported often by our fortunate incredulity, — the dagger of the heroine wears no jot of blood; its blade finds another sheath than the breast of the victim. Once only was this necessary etiquette not observed: the weapon did not slip back to its ivory handle, and Mrs. Siddons unconsciously wounded Palmer in Dionysius.

It will be readily imagined that the manager of Covent Garden was desirous to place himself, even as to tragedy itself, in full rivalry with the other house. He now led the way as to the performance of "The Grecian Daughter," which he revived for the express purpose of exhibiting Mrs. Yates in a part suited to the Grecian character of her figure and countenance. On the 21st of October she performed Euphrasia for the first time. She was supported strongly by the Evander of Henderson, and the Dionysius of Aickin. It has been observed that the most perfect forms of ancient art have little positive expression in the face; and, indeed, such a principle accords with the character of statuary, which produces a collective rather than a discriminative effect; is to be felt as a whole rather than by any single part; and which, by the forcible expression of any one passion, would tire upon the eye, which

can long rest only upon perfect symmetry and grace.

Mrs. Yates had but little expression to animate a form and countenance almost as perfect as the model which she perpetually brought to mind; her voice, too, had a monotony in perfect consent with her person; as the latter was eminently grand and beautiful, so the former was exquisitely harmonious. But passion was now the great desideratum, and of this soul of tragedy she had infinitely less than Miss Younge, then acting with her at the same theatre. She repeated "The Grecian Daughter" on the 28th, as a sort of anticipation of the character then to be immediately acted by Mrs. Siddons. That performance having decidedly appropriated the play to Drury Lane, Miss Younge and she acted, on the 31st, Hermione and Andromache in "The Distressed Mother," and all their tragedy became strictly confined in the castle of Andalusia for some time. Mrs. Yates next acted Lady Macbeth to the Macbeth of Henderson, and at that time passed for the greatest that had been seen since Mrs. Pritchard; in the sleeping scene, however, I am satisfied that Miss Younge had more speaking terrors, and in all but the commanding action with the daggers had more nature and more effect than her beautiful rival. The only perfect wife of Glamis was, at this time, as the "new star," unwisely slighted by them both, as Garrick had been mistaken by Quin. When

people in their anger, their impatience, or their spleen, availed themselves of a figure of speech of so marked a kind, it is somewhat singular that they never remembered, or never inferred, the great result of such an appearance.

It was unquestionably good management not to wear down the effect of "Isabella;" and, as an interchange, "The Grecian Daughter" touched some of the best feelings of our nature; but the other characters are feeble copies, and the dialogue has always been heard before; it is an affair of contrivance and memory, and though creditable to industry and taste, displays little genius, and no originality.

The next choice was happier, the "Jane Shore" of Rowe. This pleasing poet and excellent man was one of the honours of Westminster School, of which he was a king's scholar. His philosophy, like his poetry, was systematic, and he deduced all the virtues from a simple stock. "The foundation," says Rowe, "of all the other virtues is good nature; good nature, which is friendship between man and man, good breeding in courts, charity in religion, and the true spring of all beneficence in general." He is said to have possessed his favourite quality in a high degree, and, as a moral teacher, to give his experience along with his precept. He had been engaged in public business, and was acquainted with courts; he had written plays, and was acquainted intimately with poets; but his temper seems to have carried him

through these ordeals of fire and water without injury; as he never knew want, he put friendship to no severe trial; as he was constantly attended by success, it would have been difficult for him to avoid either benevolence or politeness. He could have no concern as to religious dogmas, and he had only to evince by his charity to others that he was grateful to that Providence which had so distinguished him among men, whom nature or circumstance constitutes the martyrs of spleen, or disappointment, or disease.

When "Shore" was first produced, the cast was such as cannot be paralleled in modern times. The charming Mrs. Oldfield was the Shore, and Mrs. Porter, whom the storm of passion always lifted from a musical monotony which characterised her, acted the furious Alicia. Booth was Hastings, Wilks, Shore, and Cibber the Gloster, a part which the great Richard III. of the stage did not disdain.

When Mrs. Siddons acted Shore, the Alicia was a Mrs. Ward, allied by name only to the family of Kemble; and she was in full contrast indeed to Mrs. Siddons. Smith in Hastings was like Smith in everything else. He wore his sword-knot for a difference; but the same healthy hunter's countenance glowed over the shoulders of all his heroes, and one drowsy, measured, level tone conveyed alike declamation or passion, pressed heavily upon the ear, and left the hearer's breast

equally unmoved with his own. Dumont (Shore), whose forgiving, gentle humanity might have been even graced by the silver tones and soft manners of James Aickin, was consigned to Bensley, whose very voice rendered all deception upon Shore impossible. He acted, as he always did, with terrible energy; and what was thus cast away upon Shore might have bestowed upon Gloster some of those fierce features which Aickin never could assume for a moment. In short, the utter insipidity of that actor in the Protector, I believe, contributed to the very general impression that he had no resemblance whatever to the crook-backed tyrant of Shakespeare, — a point which on the stage was first decided by the powerful effort of Kemble; and proved, as to composition, by myself, from a careful comparison of passages in the two plays, and an exhibition of even abundance of Shakespearean phraseology.

The dignified expression of Mrs. Siddons presented what never could have been the physiognomy of Shore. The wife of that worthy citizen had melted before the ardour of a royal suitor, and she preserved the affections of Edward by unbounded good temper and playful hilarity. Mrs. Siddons presented a being of a lofty mind which could have been depraved only by itself, — ambition or vanity alone could become her ruin. The first look of her, therefore, threw a doubt upon her situation and its sorrows.

It is a curious problem in morals, whence has arisen the almost affectionate regard paid even by the gravity of history to the mistresses of kings? Misfortune has, we know, a sanctifying power, but the distinctions between virtue and vice ought never to be forgotten. We have our own Rosamonds and Shores, and the French have their Gabrielles and their La Vallières. It never occurs to us to examine the state or commiserate the feelings of those whose rights are invaded by these amiable wantons; and Lord Orford has not been ashamed to prefer the reign of the witty, the voluptuous, the shameless adulteress, Montespan, to that of the chaste, the charitable, and the pious Maintenon.

As an outside resemblance of Shore, I think Mrs. Hartley offered the most appropriate form and features. I shall never lose the impression of her golden beauty, and question whether anything human ever exceeded it. But the dramatic effect of Shore is purely mental, and much of the character could be adequately performed only by Mrs. Siddons.

There is but little in the first act by which any enviable distinction can be gained, till we arrive at the melancholy wisdom of its close. The tender flattery of Alicia, that mankind, however ungenerous to the sex at large, would have no language for Shore but that of praise, and throw a veil of kind oblivion over her errors, is answered in a tone which Mrs. Siddons made an impressive warning.

"Why should I think that man will do for me,
What yet he never did for wretches like me?"

The hopeless sweetness that lingered on to the conclusive rhymes still comes occasionally upon my ear, and I think, if the sub-divisions of our musical scale were more numerous, that I could note down its tune: even that would be something in these discordant days.

"Ruin ensues, reproach and endless shame,
And one false step entirely damns her fame:
In vain with tears the loss she may deplore,
In vain look back on what she was before;
She sets, like stars that fall, to rise no more."

The fourth act, however, exhibits the mind of Shore in all its redeeming value. The Protector had told her that the state had determined to set aside the unavailing infancy of Edward's children, and vest the sovereign rule in abler hands: by the contemptuous expressions which he uses in stating the opposition of Hastings, he clearly indicates to her his own opinions:

"This, though of great importance to the public,
Hastings, for very peevishness and spleen,
Does stubbornly oppose."

Here our original thinker, without wasting a thought or a look upon Gloster, burst out into a blaze of engrossing exultation.

"*J. Sh.* Does he — does Hastings?
Reward him for the noble deed, just Heavens:
For this one action guard him and distinguish him
With signal mercies, and with great deliverance!"

It should be remembered that this nobleman had just insulted her misery and endeavoured to violate her person; that the friendly hand which then protected her had been fettered by his power; yet this master-key once struck, all her own injuries are dumb before the interests of her master's offspring, and she would consecrate to the end of time the generosity that had espoused their cause. Shore, therefore, never stops an instant to consider the prudent or the palatable, neither does she enter into a contest with Gloster, or for the moment "set her life at a pin's fee." It was well observed, when she first appeared, by an anonymous critic, that "all other sensations were so totally absorbed, and these she poured forth in such a rapture of dignified enthusiasm, that the spectator forgot, while she was speaking, the danger she incurred."

What Gloster could appear otherwise than insignificant by the side of Mrs. Siddons, when, in defiance of his frown, she pursued the triumph of virtue in verse numerous and beautiful and subduing like the following?

"Oh! that my tongue had every grace of speech
Great and commanding as the breath of kings;

Sweet as the poet's numbers, and prevailing
As soft persuasion to a love-sick maid;
That I had art and eloquence divine,
To pay my duty to my master's ashes,
And plead till death the cause of injur'd innocence!"

I see the hope, perhaps the exultation, of the poet in the eloquent wish of the heroine. In this passage, and another in the present scene, Rowe is inferior to no poet that ever existed. So highly, indeed, had the author and his great actress worked upon the hearer's imagination, that when tyranny denounced its vengeance, and its ministers were commanded to see her perish for want, an involuntary skepticism came over the mind that the fate was impossible, and that the very stones would become bread rather than a hair of that beauteous head should perish.

But the fifth act of this play exhibits that dreadful certainty in the great drama of life, that, for purposes which must not be questioned, the repentant and even the innocent are subjected occasionally to the persecution of the bad. The menaces of Gloster have taken effect; her guard has been long vigilant, and the unhappy frail one is perishing of hunger. She watches an opportunity, and at length arrives unnoticed at the door of Alicia, whom she had entrusted with the remains of her former affluence.

The appearance of Mrs. Siddons at this moment excited pity, but not disgust; there was no squalor,

which may be called the silent cant of misery; her frame seemed enfeebled, and her features sharp and prominent; her eye, ever obedient to her will, had parted with its brilliancy, and every sense seemed to be summed up in caution, when it stole a glance around to make sure that the appeal to her charity would not injure that dear friend from whom she expected to receive it. I always viewed this dumb language of her action in breathless agitation.

There is a beauty in the courteous but unsuitable epithet with which she addresses the servant who opens the door at her knocking:

> "Is your lady,
> My gentle friend, at home?"

She is repelled with rudeness; the man has had his orders, and is even brutal.

There was, in my early days, such a permanent property as a stage-door in our theatres, and the proscenium beyond it; so that when Shore was pushed from the door, she was turned around and staggered till supported by the firm projection behind her. Here was a terrific picture full in the eye of the pit, and this most picturesque of women knew the amazing value of it. The entrance of Alicia, raving mad, or only sensible enough for outrage, put an end to all rational feeling, and is a severe infliction upon the character of Shore. It now, however, draws to its

close, and some amends are made by the interview with her husband. The touches of true pathos here abound, and are wound up by the most affecting line that expiring frailty ever breathed into the ear of an injured being, —

"Forgive me! but forgive me."

I well remember (how is it possible I should ever forget?) the sobs, the shrieks, among the tenderer part of her audiences; or those tears, which manhood at first struggled to suppress, but at length grew proud of indulging. We then, indeed, knew all the luxury of grief; but the nerves of many a gentle being gave way before the intensity of such appeals, and fainting fits long and frequently alarmed the decorum of the house, filled almost to suffocation.

We hear much of the moral effect of the stage, and from our youth onward we all repeat, after Aristotle, the important truth, that the mind is purified by terror and pity. But I have never met with any very clear demonstration of the process; and, for the most part, the stage is imagined to improve us by its doctrine alone; and folly has often boasted its effect of this nature, in opposition to a school of which the doctrine is always pure, and the sanction unquestionable. But the whole mystery is in the emotions it raises in us, and the kindred emotions which the

wonderful principle of association is sure to awaken. And as when the benevolent emotions are excited, the heart swells and the hand is liberal, so such moments evince the effect of the lesson in a prompt forgiveness of offence, in a ready charity, and an extension even of the common kindness which we show to our relatives or our servants. We owe it to the bounty of Providence that we sympathise only with actions that promote the happiness of the species; whatever is prejudicial excites our contempt or abhorrence in proportion to its power.

When the effect of any extraordinary courage is upon us, beside the admiration (a natural tribute which we pay to the hero) a separate feeling is raised, which, for a time, strengthens our own nerve, and induces us to believe that we ourselves could thus also act or suffer. It is the same with the softer virtues; while the emotions which they excite in us are fresh, before either a selfish prudence or the hurry of life abate their keenness; at a tale of wretchedness our bounty and our tears flow copiously together, and we are improved by the sympathetic emotions of virtue. At such a moment we give to a particular case even a false measure of relief, and must become cool before we can perceive it.

"So I gave him (says Sterne) no matter what — I am ashamed to say how much, now — and was ashamed to think how little, then."— *Sentimental Journey.*

That what is so delightful may not be transient, our frequent indulgence must beget a habit, and the habit itself not merely extends but augments our virtue, as the limbs acquire strength by use. "Thus," says a profound philosopher, "proper means being at hand to raise this sympathetic emotion, its frequent reiteration may, in a good measure, supply the want of a more complete exercise. By proper discipline, therefore, every person may acquire a settled habit of virtue: intercourse with men of worth, histories of generous and disinterested actions, and frequent meditation upon them keep the sympathetic emotion in constant exercise, which by degrees introduceth a habit, and confirms the authority of virtue. With respect to education, in particular, what a spacious and commodious avenue to the heart of a young person is here opened!"

Now the drama shows all that is here suggested, in the verisimilitude of action, with every artifice of choice and preparation and contrast, in all the refinements of language and all the harmonies of verse. While the stage, too, possesses such an artist as Mrs. Siddons, every grace of form and gesture, all the eloquence of the eye, and magic of the tongue, conspire to fascinate and control the breast; and thus the sympathetic emotion frequently and at pleasure excited, we are moulded in our minds to virtue, and our hearts really purified by terror and by pity.

To return to the regular business of the theatre.

At this distance of time the policy of management seems to be somewhat strange, and its prudence questionable. A great genius had started before the public, and displayed a power of attraction, I had almost said commensurate with its value. Mrs. Siddons had acted three characters only of that copious list which the talents of our poets had given as a possession to the stage for ever; there could, therefore, exist no necessity for employing her upon new and doubtful materials. Yet at this time was a piece put into rehearsal, not even avowed by its author, meanly written, and in prose, and a heroine of the name of Louisa Montague assigned to the care of the great actress.

It seems to spring from the circulating library, and might allowably occupy the tearful half of a modern comedy. A Mr. Montague formerly addressed a very haughty lady whose name is Henrietta; she repulses him with scorn and marries a Lord Sidney, I presume for his title, obtaining a settlement of her fortune upon herself. Her nature and her independence led her to treat the noble lord with uncommon insolence, and she displays in the union all the captious tyranny of a spoiled wanton.

Mr. Montague has prudently united himself to Louisa Somerville,— they attain the highest happiness in mutual love, and a son, the pledge and

representative of their virtues. A fiendlike propensity induces Lady Sidney to endeavour to disturb this felicity, and try to awaken the affection which she had formerly inspired. She follows Montague to a masquerade, and even on her knees implores an interview, which he is weak enough to consent to, on the following morning. The whole day, however, is lingered out in their explanation, and he is seen quitting the house by a friend of Lord Sidney's. A duel follows which sends poor Montague home mortally wounded. With his last breath he implores the forgiveness of his wife, who, under the shock, expires at the feet of the unhappy man, bequeathing her little orphan to the care of her brother.

Meanly conceived, meanly written in prose, as I have said, and little bearable in the acting by Mrs. Siddons herself, it was violently opposed on the first night, quietly received on the second, and on the third, with about fifty pounds in the house, the author, his benefit, and his play sunk into oblivion, to the relief of the actress and the town. It was ascribed, however, to the pen of the friend of Shenstone, and personal acquaintance might have to answer for its intrusion. The treasury, however, so decidedly seconded the critics, the doom was never afterward reversed.

It will occur to the reader as remarkable that the fable of the above piece, changing the cast, was by an enemy, more than five and twenty

years after, made the ground of an attack upon the fame and fortune of Mrs. Siddons.

But from the attempt in tragedy of the veteran actor Hull, she turned herself to the British Racine, and animated his "Fair Penitent" with a spirit all her own. It is probable that Mrs. Siddons actually needed little preparation in any leading character of the drama. She had no doubt long settled all the points, the landmarks of her progress; however, a fortnight was well occupied in getting up the play, and on the 29th of November her Calista was added to the attractions of the stage.

If a hearer or reader of Lothario's description of his triumph turn his thoughts to the appearance of Calista, it will be difficult for him to imagine the remaining importance that can surround her person. Mountains of infamy will seem to crush her before every eye, and he will wonder how the haughtiest soul, if it can even disregard the victim of its crimes, can bear its own recollections or the broad glare of day. Calista seems always to be superior alike to vengeance or to pity. She has dignity even in her weakness, and feels reproof as an insult to her pride, when it can be none to her virtue. To Altamont she is ungenerous as well as false; all his splendid virtues, his unbounded love, are thrown from her estimate of him, and he is an object of her hatred because she neither can nor wishes to return his affection.

When alarmed by a hint of her infamy, she would pierce him through the sides of her monitor. Whoever dare to tax her with guilt is an officious parasite who is supposed to flatter merely the prejudice of her husband, that husband whose very life depends upon her regard for him. All this is in the very finest observance of nature; our passions always colour either persons or events against the strongest evidence; and under the dominion of vehement passion we can be made to see only what we wish to be true.

The second act is opened by Calista and her maid Lucilla. The look, the step of the great actress announced the whole character upon her entrance. The counsel of her attendant is to turn from the deceiver and allow of the efforts of her husband to render her happy; the rebuke is even indignant: "Away! I think not of him." The sullen picture of a solitude created by her fancy was amazingly delivered by Mrs. Siddons; but Rowe has wrought it up with fearful magnificence of language:

> "No sound to break the silence, but a brook
> That bubbling winds among the weeds: no mark
> Of any human shape that had been there,
> Unless a skeleton of some poor wretch,
> Who had, long since, like me, by love undone,
> Sought that sad place out, to despair and die in."

Calista has learned the usual cant of the guilty; she would hide her from "the malice of a base

world," and even from shame, but that it must accompany her flight. Nothing could exceed the agony with which Mrs. Siddons ejaculated:

> "To be a tale for fools! scorn'd by the women,
> And pity'd by the men! O, insupportable!"

Upon the entrance of Altamont she recovers her self-possession, and it is impossible to describe the apathy beyond all hope of change with which she considered her wedding-day.

The scene with Horatio had some powerful touches; though for the greater part, he has the mastery in the altercation, the almost frantic assumption of her privilege struck like a thunderbolt.

> "Dishonour blast thee, base, unmanner'd slave,
> That dar'st forget my birth, and sacred sex,
> And shock me with the rude, unhallow'd sound!"

The snatching and tearing the letter, and the contemptuous rebuke of the monitor whom she had foiled, and left without the evidence that could alone justify his conduct, were astonishingly perfect.

The fourth act is opened by a tearful but ineffectual interview between Calista and Lothario. Altamont enters, and from her own lips overhears a confession of his wrongs. The duel follows, and leisurely enough, in the presence of Calista; she hears the triumph of her lover boasted by him in his last moments, does not faint, thinks not of

summoning aid, and never tries to force herself between their weapons. In reading the play I feel this to be one of the most awkward situations in which an actress can possibly be placed. I have seen this great genius many times in the character; never then noticed any deficiency, and cannot imagine, while I am writing, how she was employed during the time.

On the entrance of Sciolto, from a host of beauties, must be snatched the two lines:

> "Is it the voice of thunder, or my father?"

and

> "'Tis for my ruin that the tempest rises."

"The Fair Penitent" is a play of anticipations: the guilt of the heroine is established in the first act, and by the comic expedient of dropping a letter; the profligate is killed in the fourth; and the fifth is furnished by the undertaker, the body lying in state with its usual accompaniments of escutcheons and skulls and bones, with the accomplice as chief mourner, to survey his fate and meditate her own.

The moral beauties, however, shoot with great lustre through the pompous horror, and the pantomimic display of the scene is rendered accessory to much powerful impression:

> "What charnel has been rifled for these bones?
> Fie! this is pageantry. They look uncouthly;
> But what of that, if he or she that own'd 'em,

Safe from disquiet sit, and smile to see
The farce their miserable relics play?

. . . . . .

But here's a sight is terrible indeed!
Is this that haughty, gallant, gay Lothario?
That dear perfidious — ah! how pale he looks!"

The author of the "Night Thoughts" owned here the tragic sublimity of Rowe, and his Zanga is but the echo of Calista:

"*Zanga.* Is this Alonzo? Where's his haughty mien? Is that the hand which smote me? Heav'ns, how pale!"

Mr. Cumberland in some remarks upon this play, comparing it with "The Fatal Dowry," has censured what he calls the pagan principle of avoiding guilty shame by suicide. The high fantastic principle of honour belongs, however, to chivalrous Christianity rather than to pagan antiquity. Was this expiation of disgrace ever objected to Corneille, — is it not the soul of the immortal "Cid?" Nay, much later, did not Mr. Burke exult in the supposition that Antoinette would relieve herself from the infamy of perishing by a vulgar hand? He thus alludes to the sharp antidote to disgrace: "That in the last extremity she will save herself from the last disgrace, and that if she must fall she will fall by no ignoble hand."

But the critic's desire to lower the fame of Rowe makes him stoop even to the petty verbal cavil which follows. Rowe had talked of that

spirit that dwelt in Latian breasts, when "Rome was mistress of the world." "To what," says he, "does that piece of information tend, that Rome was mistress of the world?" To what? Why, to the inference that the period of public and private honour was the same, — that her empire was the result of her virtues.

The last act is protracted by several ingenious expedients; the father, whose firm nerve has supplied his daughter with the means of expiating her guilt, hurries, however, from the sight of the sacrifice. He is summoned to an encounter of the Lothario faction, in the mode of the Capulets and Montagues, and perishes, like Mercutio, in this private feud. The intelligence of his fate hurries on the hitherto lingering dagger.

"*Cal.* And dost thou bear me yet, thou patient earth?"

The clouds of error dispel over dying eyes; and the heroine, comforted by paternal forgiveness, and sensible to the reproaching goodness of her husband, leaves him a legacy of beginning affection, and admires something more than his virtues:

> "Now, 'tis too late,
> And yet my eyes take pleasure to behold thee;
> Thou art their last dear object."

As to the general manners by which Mrs. Siddons discriminated Calista, they seem to be "a haughty affectation of being above control, which

a deviation from virtue ever produces in a great, but proud, woman; the conscience is stifled by an assumption of superiority, — she does not deny the rule, but conceives herself an allowed exception. For the most part, her Calista walked with some precipitation; her gestures were more frequent and violent, her eyes restless and suspicious; she was more vehement and loud; pride and shame were struggling for superiority, guilt and indignation alike contributed to contract her brow; the most speaking terrors preceded and announced the blow of death. Calista was hitherto the noblest effort of her powers, and the sound critic might anticipate in this impersonation of "The Fair Penitent" the more concentrated energies of Lady Macbeth.

While our great actress was thus, with rapid step, seizing all the honours of tragedy, it must not be supposed that no effort was made to sustain the fame of one of her rivals. An anonymous critic, who might probably be the husband of Mrs. Yates, was "better employed" than seeing Mrs. Siddons in Calista, by making "a 'willing part' of the audience at Covent Garden. It would have been disreputable to the town not to have 'vindicated their taste' by being present at such acting as Mrs. Yates's Almeria."

Now, here are two genteel insinuations: first, that the spectators of Mrs. Siddons go unwillingly to her performances; and, second, that the tasteless only can admire them. But something was

to be said to palliate the want in Mrs. Yates of that vivid and various expression which distinguished her rival; and Dickey here excelled his usual skill. "If," says he, "her countenance is not over-changing, it suits the unchanging sorrows of Almeria." He thought it necessary to assign a reason why the very clothes she wore did not contribute to her fame. "From the nature and circumstances of Almeria, Mrs. Yates had no opportunity of showing her accomplished taste in dress."

The reader will not, I trust, suppose me insensible to the powers of Mrs. Yates, though I reprehend the baseness of thus combating her rival. So deeply, indeed, am I impressed with the majestic grandeur of her person, and the musical enchantment of her declamation, that, in this imperial tragedy of Congreve's, I cordially agree with our critic, that her fourth act, and her last scene, with Doctor Johnson's favourite series of lines in the second act, were all of them in the "highest style of sublime tragedy."

At the time when I am recording the contests of a former period, we are exempted from similar effects, not by the prevalence of softer manners, but by the absence of anything approaching to greatness.

It is a mere grammatical remark, but it may be worth noticing, that Rowe in this play has deformed his lines with those barbarous contrac-

tions sha'not and wo'not, for shall and will not; where the prosody is injured by the elision, and the speaker would be stronger by being allowed the full words. I fear the practice was fashionable in his time, but demands no continuance in ours. Had I been Mr. Kemble, I would never have reprinted in Lothario:

"This wo'not brook delay."

Can't and won't are colloquial monosyllables in present use, but when we give the two syllables we articulate both the words.

The unprecedented attraction of Mrs. Siddons had been met on the part of the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre with suitable liberality. Her engagement as to weekly salary was upon an annual rise from £10. I mention this to reconcile the minds of some artistes of the present day to the acceptance of those enormous sums, by the profligacy of managers, forced upon their modesty; which must, by a law in nature, be upon a par with their genius.

The good fortune of our great actress was seconded by her prudence; she launched into no unnecessary expense, to be herself anywhere implied sufficient consequence. She had genteel lodgings in the Strand; was at the theatre in a few minutes; and full of the best inspiration, a mother's feeling for her family, she prepared herself for a life of such exertion as even mocks

the toil of mere manual art. But although, as to weekly payment, the managers had not, it may be thought, done too much themselves, they put it in the power of the public to supply any deficiency by allowing her two benefit nights, and relinquishing the nightly charge, perhaps about £90. Mr. Harris at this time stood, I believe, under an expense at the other house of £150. The fashionable world never distinguished itself with more credit than in the patronage of this charming woman. Her door saw more carriages daily before it than any other private residence in town, — it became a passion to admire her, and an honour to be of her acquaintance. We now begin to see dress company in the upper circles, and the demand for boxes was so great at her benefit that the proprietors gave her the use of their own six on that occasion, which she felt to be a seasonable and profitable compliment. The play selected was Otway's "Venice Preserved," which, as far as pathos is concerned, may be placed in the first rank, if not in the very first place, of English tragedies. In Belvidera Mrs. Siddons had to contend with the fame, or the remembrance, of all the great actresses of the stage, from famous Madame Barry, as she was called, the heroine of the poet and of Betterton, to the perhaps nearly equal Mrs. Barry, the wife of the accomplished rival of Garrick. Of all our poets, Otway seems to have had the tenderest

soul; and he appears to stand as the proud interpreter of the loveliest relation between the sexes. With an imagination capable of the most exquisite refinements of passion, he possessed a diction alone fitted to reveal them. He had the "thoughts that breathe," he had "the words that burn."

There is frequently much of personal history in dramatic composition, — the author speaks in the character. A few letters exist, signed by Otway, which show him to have entertained a most ardent love for seven years, and to have felt all the agonies of that passion. His language to the lady, Mrs. Barry, his heroine, sometimes reminds one of his Jaffier. "I have consulted, too, my very self, and find how careless Nature was in framing me; seasoned me hastily with all the most violent inclinations and desires, but omitted the ornaments that should make those qualities become me. I have consulted, too, my lot of fortune, and find how foolishly I wish possession of what is so precious all the world's too cheap for it."

The reader of Otway will instantly refer to the melancholy apostrophe:

> "Tell me why, good Heav'n,
> Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,
> Aspiring thoughts, and elegant desires
> That fill the happiest man!" etc.

He flowed so easily into verse, that he seems unable to keep out of it in his prose. When he

writes his gratitude to the Duchess of Portsmouth, in the dedication to the present play, he has these passages printed in prose :

> "Your Grace, next Heav'n, deserves it amply from me;
> That gave me life, but on a hard condition;
> Your noble pity and compassion found me
> Where I was far cast backward from my blessing —
> Down in the rear of fortune; call'd me up,
> Plac'd me in the shine, and I have felt its comfort."

There can be no doubt that "Venice Preserved" must have been greatly productive to its author. Davies, in consent with the common notion of his poverty, says that Jacob Tonson gave £15 for the copyright; but this is written without reflection. The play was printed first in 1682, for Hindmarsh, the original purchaser; in 1704 it appears printed for Ben Tooke, and, I suppose, was by him assigned over to the great patron Jacob, who purchased the right that he might collect the works into volumes, which he did in 1728.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE performance of Belvidera is now to be gone through with the same degree of attention paid to other characters; and, though only beauties of great prominence can be recorded, where all was beautiful, yet, however imperfect the transcript, it will afford some guide to future artists in selecting the luminous points of their own composition. Nor need they apprehend any servility, as the result of such attention to the merits of others. Many points of impression are inherent in the character: the action is regulated by the act, — it must always be done in one way; others admit of almost infinite variety, and in the performer exhibit the extent of his studies in human nature. I have heard of an actor who would not allow his son to attend the performances of my friend Kemble, lest his own manner should not be original. Such a rule would have kept Southern from the page of Shakespeare, the author of "Paradise Lost" from the perusal of the Iliad. Every individual's power is or may be an aggregate of many forces reconciled to his own. I see in the actor alluded

to what he might have learned; first, to "use all gently," and give consequence to moderation; neither to bellow nor to strut, for the first is not eloquent, and the second is not dignified; to avoid all violent extremes, piano succeeding forte, and to keep himself upon his centre, and to move from it. The greatest difficulty in the actor's art is to take his station upon the stage and remain on it, in full possession of himself and indifferent as to his change of place.

When Mrs. Siddons announced her intention as to "Venice Preserved," the great point was to find a Jaffier. Smith had none of the softer parts of conversation about him. His Jaffier would at least have sounded like Pierre. The recollection of the wonders in the rivalry between Garrick and Barry would be injurious here; and the mechanism of the character, however well studied, would do nothing without that show of passion, in the want of which Jaffier conspires against a higher sovereignty than that of Venice.

Mr. Brereton, however, felt himself inspired to make the attempt, and, to the surprise of all, acquitted himself in the most masterly manner. From about the level of such parts as Lewson, he sprung into the crown and hearted seat of love, and played in the wonderful fourth act fully up to the demand of such a Belvidera. He was like a thing inspired, and the source of his inspiration was the lovely being with whom he was to act.

He might properly exclaim with Leontes before Hermione:

"There is an air comes from her."

There was no Venetian costume affected, for in modern times it is not worth the inquiry for stage purposes how the different parts of Europe dressed. Jaffier wore a grave but elegant suit, agreeing with his recent circumstances. Pierre, as a soldier, a full suit of scarlet and gold. I think Mr. Kemble once told me that the Venetian soldiers wore white; some slight indication of which peeped up in the white hat and feather of our older Pierres, for which Davies confesses himself unable to assign any reason. Bensley in that character was fully up to the mark, and had just left his friend, after appointing a midnight meeting for the purposes of precious mischief, when the heroine enters on her fond husband's ejaculating, "Belvidera! poor Belvidera."

He whom the world has injured is tempted to think that the ties of even kindred and connection are but loosely bound about him, and he fancies a change possible in all. The notion was dissipated to air by the glowing exultation with which Mrs. Siddons threw herself into the embrace of Jaffier:

"Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom,
With all the resolution of strong truth?
I joy more in thee

Than did thy mother, when she hugg'd thee first,
And bless'd the gods for all her travail past."

The reverse feeling in Jaffier now carries his mind up to sublimity of expression — sublimity which does not exaggerate its object. I give the passage here as the eternal eulogy of the sex:

"O woman, lovely woman! nature made thee
To temper man; we had been brutes without you:
Angels are painted fair, to look like you.
There's in you all that we believe of heaven,
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
Eternal joy and everlasting love."

Upon his picturing the miseries of want, with the images of which his fancy was teeming, nothing ever exceeded the fine burst of passion from Belvidera, —

"O, I will love thee, even in madness love thee!" —

and the act closed with all the natural anticipations of the still greater effects that were to follow.

There is something singularly irregular in the scenery of this play. Upon the breaking up of Jaffier's domestic establishment, he lodges Belvidera, as he tells Pierre, privately for a day or two, till he sees further what fortune will do for him. We next learn that a council is held, hard by, for the destruction of the empire, and that Jaffier is to be led to the place. We find it not badly

chosen; it is the house of the Greek courtesan, Aquilina. But our surprise is extreme to see the private lodging of Belvidera under the same roof. Yet this is actually the case, though our audiences never suspect a syllable of the matter; for when Jaffier has been led to this dark divan, he finds himself unexpectedly at home; he calls rather loudly for Belvidera; awakens her from her repose; she enters the den of the conspirators, and strives to carry off her husband to his rest, but is given to the ruffians as a hostage, till we learn that old Renault has led her back to her apartment.

The modern alteration of this play omits the description of Belvidera's broken slumbers and expecting arms, and the audience imagine that Jaffier has brought her with him, and left her without, till the moment when it became necessary to produce her as his surety. If this was the design, more should have been omitted, particularly:

> "Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?"

The reader anxious for purity will consider that the house may really not be Aquilina's, but that it is one of those immense palaces of Italy, in which persons reside totally apart; where there is room enough for treason to conspire, and profligacy to intrigue, and lonely want to retire, in forgotten apartments, out of the view and suspicion of each other.

For Belvidera, however, this introduction to the conspirators is one of the most enchanting scenes which fancy ever created out of passion and circumstance. Mrs. Siddons bestowed her utmost attention upon it; the almost shriek of the exclamation thrilled every nerve:

"Part! must we part?"

As she is rising from her knees, the conspirators, by their organ Renault, having conjured her to do so, —

"Rise, madam, and command among your servants," —

the alarmed yet searching survey which she took of them was one of those expressions in which the actress writes with characters of fire: you felt that there was a language more eloquent than speech, and saw beauty and intelligence interpret the very silence of the poet.

The agony of astonishment in which she listens to Jaffier's bequest of her, with the accompanying dagger, the sob of melting reproach upon the words, —

"O, thou unkind one!"

and the insupportable pathos with which she uttered:

"Don't, pry'thee don't, in poverty forsake me!"

prepared the house for the repetition of the word "Jaffier!" as she is borne off, and left an inter-

val for the recovery of a great portion of her hearers from a sympathy too intense to be longer endured. The recollections of such power

> "Pursue and overtake the wings of time;
> And bring about again the hours, the days,
> The years that made me happy."

When thus inspired by Otway, Mrs. Siddons was the true Pythian priestess, and delivered the oracles of Apollo. If the reader suspect me of enthusiasm, I proudly plead guilty to the charge: the usual feelings of our nature were sufficient for her conquest over the audience, but enthusiasm only can attempt to describe the means or the effects.

In the third act every sensible Belvidera must regret that the stage curtailments do not allow her to give the following fine portrait of a tender and elegant mind engaged in a hellish project:

> "*Belv.* Why dwells that busy cloud upon thy face?
> Why am I made a stranger? — why that sigh,
> And I not know the cause? Why, when the world
> Is wrapt in rest, why chooses then my love
> To wander up and down in horrid darkness? —
> Why starts he now, and looks as if he wish'd
> His fate were finished? — Tell me, ease my fears:
> Lest when we next time meet, I want the power
> To search into the sickness of thy mind,
> But talk as wildly then as thou look'st now."

The charm of this lovely inquiry is its strict nature; it grows alone out of the relations of the

two beings: here is no figurative gloomy pomp; the poet and his art are concealed; Belvidera expostulates with her Jaffier.

However, the pruning knife has not cut away all the shoots from this tree of poetry, although the branches here and there look disunited, from a want of those lighter hangings that fill up the great mass so beautifully in the genuine work.

In the very fine reference to Portia, nothing could exceed the swell of soul, but the retort to Jaffier's question of reproach:

"No:
For Brutus trusted her."

The noble effusion of filial piety was rendered amazingly:

"Murder my father!"

and all the witchery of woman dwelt in the question *ad hominem:*

"And can'st thou shed the blood that gave me being?"

The "Remember twelve!" at parting, I find had always been as a great sea-mark to the spectators of this admirable scene. The difficulty is to preserve it from even the slightest sensual effect, parting from the lips of beauty so striking: the querulous melancholy of tone, partaking of doubt, though still hoping the best, kept it divinely pure in the present instance; and reiterated ap-

plause attested the discernment, as well as feeling, of this politest of audiences.

The fourth act shows the struggles of a false point of honour against humanity and love. The argument, however, is closed by the triumphant woman, and the safety of all she loves seems to be within her grasp. The conspiracy is betrayed — the accomplices disdain the stipulated mercy, and Jaffier is conscious of being himself the ruin of the man whom he best loved. It is impossible to find, I think, a scene of equal variety and emotion. The way that Belvidera herself provokes the sacrifice, by reminding him of the approaching death of his friends and the falsehood of the senate, altogether constitutes a restless agony, which is relieved by the sudden spring of Belvidera into the arms of Jaffier, where her

"Now then, kill me!"

renders such an action impossible to anything human.

I have said that the acting of Brereton in this scene was fully up to the demand of the finest actress I have ever known. Kemble had more art, but his sorrow was not so manly, — he was infinitely more picturesque, but I question whether he touched the heart beyond Brereton, in this his moment of inspiration.

The way in which this play was originally printed has left one speech in this, its capital

scene, imperfect; a line is lost, as a hundred others might have been, quite unobserved by the slovenly collectors and republishers of our great dramatic writers. I allude to the following of Belvidera:

"What wilt thou do? ah, do not kill me, Jaffier!
Pity these panting breasts, and trembling limbs,
That us'd to clasp thee when thy looks were milder,
. . . . . .
That yet hang heavy on my unpurg'd soul,
And plunge it not into eternal darkness."

Before the last line but one, something was inserted as to the sins of her life, many yet recent, and certainly unatoned, which hung heavy upon her soul. Fancy may range its fill in search of Otway's probable expression; but something must be supplied to help the meaning, though between hooks.

[Think of the many sins I have committed.]

The readiest and the best cure for these disorders upon the stage, is to cut them out; a process hardly felt in our old plays, for genius is ever abundant.

In the fifth act, Belvidera has now lost half her soul in the scene with her father Priuli. The tender adjuration, by her mother's virtues and her power of pleasing:

"Look kindly on me; in my face behold
The lineaments of hers you've kissed so often,
Pleading the cause of your poor cast-off child."

The request to be laid when dead

> "By the dear ashes of my tender mother;
> She would have pitied me, had fate yet spar'd her —"

And that masterly description of what passed between Jaffier and herself. I extract but a tithe of the picture:

> "He dragg'd me to the ground, and at my bosom
> Presented horrid death; cried out, 'My friends!
> Where are my friends?' swore, wept, rag'd, threaten'd, lov'd,
> For he yet lov'd, and that dear love preserv'd me
> To this last trial of a father's pity."

Epic poetry is sacred; no commentator, on the favourite pretext of interpolation, ever thought of cutting down the supplication of Priam to Achilles, certainly not more distinguished than this interview between Belvidera and Priuli for the genuine accents of nature.

The actress did wonders with all that the prompter's copy had left her, but should have been allowed to use her own feeling as to what ought to be preserved. For the stage, what taste can be surer than that of a woman of sensibility, highly cultivated, with eloquence to convey all that she strongly feels?

The final scene of Jaffier and Belvidera abounds with emotions, from the heaviest sorrow up to frenzy. Our inimitable actress seized every point

as it rose, and was truth itself in her delineation. With reference to her husband's question as to their wedding, —

> "But was't a miserable day?" —

the misery to have heard it so termed, and the reluctance to articulate such sounds, were finely conceived. I ought to notice that the solemn blessing pronounced by Jaffier upon Belvidera is one of the most beautiful effusions ever combined by fancy and melancholy tenderness. The soliloquy, when Jaffier leaves her, called forth efforts from Mrs. Siddons which seemed to exceed the strength of woman — but who is ignorant of the passage and all its frantic horror? What admirable painting in these two lines! —

> "The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain;
> I long for thick substantial sleep."

The fondness of the stage for an explosive exit retrenches in the representation Otway's expression of the deliquium into which Belvidera has fallen, — from the horrors of central hell she has now wandered to a glorious death with her husband:

> "Say not a word of this to my old father.
> Murmuring streams, soft shades, and springing flowers,
> Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of amber."

The distraction which conducts to her end was without its eternal white satin dress, and then

only did the action upon the ground, "I'll dig, dig the den up," appear more than mere noisy vehemence. So great was the impression of her Belvidera that the most jealous advocates for preceding excellence only mentioned the name of Mrs. Cibber.

I cannot leave the *chef-d'œuvre* of Otway without some notice of his death, which is affecting in its circumstances, however told. One account makes him expire at the Bull public house, on Tower Hill, the 14th of April, 1685, of the effects of hunger. Dennis, the critic, told Spence that Otway had a friend named Blakiston, who was shot; Otway pursued the murderer in his flight toward Dover; on his return, violently heated, he inconsiderately drank water, which caused fever and killed him. He probably died, as it is stated, at the Bull, which might be one of his many haunts. All the "aspiring thoughts and elegant desires" which made him passionately fond of Mrs. Barry, led him to rival the profligate Rochester in her affections, and devote his muse to her celebrity, could stoop to a house of vulgar resort and sottish enjoyments. When Otway wrote Monimia for Mrs. Barry, she was in the twenty-second year of her age, and had then been some time the pupil of Rochester. But fate dropped the curtain upon his loves, his embarrassments, and his genius, at the early age of thirty-four. His genius increased with his years, — "Venice Pre-

served" is greatly superior to his "Orphan." In both, as Dryden said, "the passions are truly touched, — nature is there, which is the greatest beauty."

While the most perfect composition of tragedy was thus extending the fame of a great actress at one theatre, an experiment at the other was rendering the powers of Henderson and Miss Younge not merely useless but ridiculous. The son of the great scholar Bentley, although never positively successful in anything, had a strong opinion of his talent attached to him by such men even as Gray and Walpole. But there was something bizarre in all his attempts. If he aimed out of the common route, his aim was without force; his freedom was flippant, his style loose, his sentiments trite, and his dialogue familiar. He had died in October, 1782, and had published, in 1767, a tragedy called "Philodāmus," or as he tells us, in favour of an easier cadence, "Philódamus." The courtship, the paternal vigilance and sagacity, the spousal preparations of this play, convulsed the house with laughter from the first scene to the last. A few specimens may amuse or surprise the reader. A father and a sovereign, in Asia, while disclosing some family interests to his freedman, thus breaks off:

> "But see, my son! which cuts our time too short
> For more particulars."

Nor is he less happy in the presence of his daughter, to whom he thus speaks relative to her lover Epicrates:

"*Phil.* For when I found that you received his visits,
And with a kind of caution that imply'd
We would not have the old man find us out —
Erato. Will you but give me leave?
Phil. Not till I've done."

This young lady on the point of marriage is thus congratulated by her brother; her reply is peculiar:

"All joy to thee, my dearest Erato!
Erato. My brother, you felicitate but coolly."

Oh, the ardent expectations of these lovers!

"Now no more;
Go to Euphemia, while we try Philodamus."

I have room only for one of his sublimest figures, as he was much admired for his poetry:

"The peacock beauty, though it spread its state
Quite to the tip-toe stretch of vanity,
Wishes more eyes might stud its gaudy train."

The puns in the third line will be often repeated, I imagine. I dare not predict the same of the following phrase:

"Scarce can life
Cohabit with the tumult of my joy."

The existence of that joy without its partner would be rather unusual. The instructions as to the nuptials which I spoke of shall close the subject:

> "Contract your transports, and retire a little,
> While they prepare this chamber for the ceremony
> That gives you to each other, once and ever."

This play, printed elegantly in quarto for Dodsley, the author dedicated to her Majesty the queen; but as from modesty he would not place her name where he withheld his own, he assigns to her virtues the second place in this kingdom, and ascribes to her a great share in those to which she yields the preëminence. Thus indicating the gracious person intended, according to the poetical rule laid down in the couplet of Pope:

> "The same for ever! and describ'd by all
> With Truth and Goodness, as with Crown and Ball."

Perhaps some of Doctor Bentley's criticism was compensated by his son's poetry; and "Philodamus" was the filial atonement for the father's outrage upon the "Paradise Lost."

But, although Covent Garden derived no support from modern tragedy, it should be remembered that Henderson was always ready in the grand characters of Shakespeare; always masterly and profound, subtle and discriminative; and that Mrs. Yates and Miss Younge sustained the hero-

ines with powers undiminished hitherto by time. Drury Lane Theatre, relying upon the unparalleled attraction of Mrs. Siddons, became more than satisfied with Miss Farren, and allowed the comic wonder, Abington, to settle for the first time in the rival state. Her appearance now at Covent Garden produced, I remember, great sensation; her temperate vivacity, her keenness, her impersonation, her taste, her graceful manners, rendered her the peculiar delight of the fashionable world; they had long permitted her almost to legislate in dress, and my female readers may expect to be told in what array she presented herself to her old friends under this new and splendid roof. When she hurried on the stage, she was attired in a dress which their mothers deemed simple and characteristic of Lady Flutter; the train and petticoat were of white and silver stuff, the body and sash of a dark Carmelite satin, with short white sleeves. I recede with veneration from all attempts to describe what constituted then the upper half of the figure; but I may respectfully insinuate that Mrs. Abington, as to the surface, was not apt to allow the smallest spot to be under the undisputed control of nature. As some compensation for this dedication of her personal charms to art, those of her acting were pure and lovely nature indeed.

She spoke an address upon this occasion, very probably her own, of which one point excited a

titter among those who did and those who did not understand the French language:

> "Neither the hoyden, rough from Congreve's lays,
> Unknowing in French manners and French phrase,
> Who, conscious of no crime in speaking plain,
> Will bawl out smock for *chemise de la reine*."

"The Discovery," in which she now appeared as Lady Flutter, was a comedy which she had been taught to esteem by its success under Garrick. That great master had rendered Sir Anthony Brainville attractive by a perfect negation of all the qualities which distinguished himself as an actor. All the smartness of his manner, the quickness of his turn, the pungency of his utterance, and the brilliancy of his expression were now smothered in cotton, reduced to the most insipid and polished imbecility. Henderson, in following Mr. Garrick, like him, laid himself completely aside. He spoke nasally, and was, in truth, a picture of nothing, astonishingly like.

I notice here the first strong indication of what extended theatres were bringing upon us. Mrs. Sheridan's "Discovery" now began to look languid; it was called a five-volumed novel. We were hastening into the rapid school; travelling, like barbarians, back from the ear to the eye, and only to be kept awake by the incessant flutter of action. O'Keefe had now established himself in comic opera as well as farce; and "The Castle of

Andalusia" had completely fortified his "Banditti," routed the year before totally on their first appearance. Whether he made any use of D'Urfey's play with the same title I have not been idle enough to ascertain.

I return to Drury Lane Theatre. Their Majesties, when visiting the theatres, hardly ever ventured upon tragedy. The king himself enjoyed a hearty laugh at his favourite comedian; and indeed comedy associated most naturally with the joyous occasion which gave the sovereign and his family to the grateful welcome of his people.[1] But Mrs. Siddons had penetrated the circle at Buckingham House, and in the month of January, 1783, the royal party saw her in all her characters. There was an ardour in this patronage that showed the deep impression she had made. On the 2d her Euphrasia was graced by majesty; on the 9th her Belvidera; on the 20th her Calista; on the 23d her Shore; and on the 28th her Isabella. Even the offensive politics of the manager vanished before the charms of the new sovereign of the stage.

> "Hic templum ingens Siddonia
> Condebat, donis opulentum et numine Divæ."

Among the higher orders she had become an unfailing topic of inquiry and praise: they were

[1] The favourite comedian of his late Majesty was Mr. Quirk, an actor of very great and peculiar merit, and a most diligent and faithful servant of the public.

anxious to know all the preparations for effects so powerful, her modes of study, the discipline of her mind; and the actress replied with temper and modesty to many questions at which she must internally have smiled. Lady L—— was said, currently, to have gone at once to the grand secret by a question which might have been clothed in less alarming words. "Pray, madam, when you are to prepare yourself in a character, what is your primary object of attention, the superstructure, as it may be called, or the foundation of the part?"

Now, a character being written, that is, the superstructure reared by the poet, it seems to be difficult to arrive at all at the foundation of the character but through this very superstructure; in other words, the actions declare the passions from which they spring. These "blue beans in a blue bladder" produced, I have heard, a pause of some length; however, the actress could not but be intelligible, and her reply showed the sort of meaning she fancied in the question. "When a part is first put before me for study, I look it over in a general way to see if it is in nature, and if it is, I am sure it can be played."

As to her mode of study, in her apartment it was silent. She conceived there certainly all that she meant to do; but it was only at rehearsal that she knew the effect of voice upon the conception. For some time after her return to town

she was fond of having the experience of old Mr. Sheridan to confirm her own judgment; but he went to the theatre with her, "where alone," she said, "she could show him exactly what she could do at night."

Having thus incidentally mentioned Mr. Sheridan, who was an excellent theorist certainly, I take leave to notice his "Rhetorical Prelections" (for the title of Lowth's incomparable labours might be easier attained than his genius and taste), by which he vainly hoped to impress the people with the dignity of his art. At the west end of the town he used what was called Hickford's great room, in Brewer Street, Golden Square. There perhaps he collected from about one hundred to two hundred friends and amateurs to hear his course of lectures in three divisions; and there assuredly the clergy might learn to give more exact impression to the liturgy, the senator more dignity to his harangue, and the poet more music to his verse. He made considerable effect in the speeches of our Demosthenes, Lord Chatham, and of his Grecian prototype. Much of the Church service, too, he stripped of the usual nasal monotony, and settled the emphasis by a sound logic. In poetry I consider him to have made more of the "Alexander's Feast" and the famous "Elegy" by Gray than even very attentive readers could have discovered. He had all the confidence that the stage alone can bestow, much love for his art, and

a long life bestowed upon it. I thought he rather sunk under Milton; and, though he was fully aware of the slight suspensive pause at the end of the line where the sense was carried into another, yet the verses were often too little made out for their perfect charm. Mrs. Siddons and her sister, the late Mrs. Twiss, attended him; his friend Henderson, too, occasionally; and the knowledge that they did so aided his own attraction; a fact which he may be excused for not having himself discovered.

Like the lord chief justice, he carried his judgment from Westminster into the city, and perhaps succeeded the debaters at Coachmakers' Hall. The filthy state of its floors and benches frighted the refined part of the sex from an unnecessary attempt to improve their natural eloquence.

It was before remarked that Mrs. Ward was a very poor second to Mrs. Siddons. Indeed where, as in Alicia, youth and beauty and high accomplishments were to be inferred, a variety of allusions became incredible. With respect to this sort of verisimilitude on the stage, the perfections themselves must be in the actress, or that earnest passion which prevents the perception of their want. Where even this soul of tragedy exists in no striking degree, we can bear to hear a fine woman talk of her beauty, and without a glance of correction upon homely features; but some excellence must be visible, or the privilege is refused.

On the 6th of January Miss Kemble, a sister of Mrs. Siddons, acted, for the first time in London, the above rival of Shore. In my life of their brother I have remarked upon the cruelty and the impolicy of bringing the sisters to the same theatre; it was unlikely that there should be no resemblance — rather that there should not be even a strong one — in person, voice, and manner. The charm of contrasted excellence, therefore, was not likely to be found in them. If Miss Kemble was superior to Mrs. Siddons, she destroyed her sister; if she was inferior her affinity placed her on a worse footing than another contemporary would have occupied. In family competitions of the same sex, the second place is nothing.

This lady is no more; that circumstance, however, neither will, nor need to influence my opinion of her. She had many fine qualities. Her mind was exceedingly cultivated, her person well formed, her face beautiful, her eye remarkably brilliant, but she was not a great actress: her powers were destroyed by her diffidence; she did not interest by her softness, she did not terrify by her rage; but still the requisites were so obvious that her failure excited astonishment. When I say failure, I mean only as to the reaching the point of her own hope and the expectation of her friends.

Mrs. Abington had long decided upon a revival of "The Scornful Lady," a comedy by Beaumont

and Fletcher; and Cooke, the barrister, made for her an alteration of the play, with the address that might be expected from the author of "The Elements of Dramatic Criticism." He changed the epithet for the fair heroine, who was now only the "capricious." The modern Thalia acted the lady without the sanguinary results attending her performance by Mrs. Oldfield. The beaux of her time wore swords at the theatre, and Beau Fielding received a thrust from the weapon of a Mr. Fulwood, twelve inches deep. Out of kindness to Mrs. Oldfield, the latter left the place after the disturbance; but having thus "fleshed his sword" for the evening, he retired to the other theatre, where, singling out an old antagonist, Captain Cusack, he demanded immediate satisfaction for some former offence; the gentlemen hurried to the field of honour, and the expecting audience were speedily informed that Fulwood was killed on the spot, and that the captain declined all the public honours of his achievement.

Mrs. Abington restored the comedy of Fletcher to all its former fame, and the renewed experiments and detections between the Elder Loveless and his capricious lady were a source of rich entertainment to the audience. Sir Roger, the curate, was the only character omitted in the present play; it is now, thank decency, totally unclerical here; and with him vanished much of the ribaldry which had delighted our ancestors. Nothing

could be better than the Elder Loveless of Wroughton. It may be worth noticing that the costume of James's reign was strictly attended to in the dresses of the characters; and I remember the enjoyment of Mrs. Abington, in a high ruff and a rich silver silk edged with black velvet.

I take the liberty to censure in this place a very mischievous tone of criticism which began now to be prevalent in the daily press. Certain flimsy but authoritative writers, with a view, perhaps, at best to recommend themselves to the leading performers of both houses, affected a sovereign contempt for the writings of men honoured by the ablest judgments; and the public were told that such stuff as the plays cited was only rendered bearable by the powers of the reigning favourites. The incense of such jargon fumed daily before Mrs. Siddons as well as others, but I believe her own impressions of the poets' merit were little disturbed by these flights of impudence. She knew that, from Mrs. Elizabeth Barry to herself, their characters had always been great in the hands of adequate performers; and that, if they ever did fail in their effect, the cause of that failure was not in the author. One play in particular had been loaded with this despicable sort of commentary; I mean "The Mourning Bride" of Congreve, — his pantomime, as it was styled in the cant of the times. This play, notwithstanding, Mrs. Siddons selected for her second benefit.

As the application of the term pantomime to this tragedy is intended for disparagement, it may be as well to look a little at its meaning, in order to judge how far it applies to the play in question. The pantomime is a dramatic entertainment where everything is shown in action. As a censure, therefore, it implies that the play, however aided by speech, retains too much of this character — that it is a show, and little but a show. If the critics mean that this tragedy is more complex in its action than perhaps the French stage admits, this as an objection applies equally to the whole series of English authors, and to Shakespeare very particularly indeed. So picturesque and various are the situations of that great poet, so intelligent his dumb show, abstracted from all speech, that he might be almost styled the painter's poet, and the deaf can never fail to comprehend the full scope of his exhibitions. It remains, therefore, to examine how Congreve stands with respect to the other nerves of the drama, — description, sentiment, and passion. As to verbal description, in the opinion of Doctor Johnson, he has the most expressive passage in English literature. It is given to his Almeria, the character from its gentleness best suited to the placid eloquence of description. It is the impression made by a Gothic cathedral on the sensitive mind. *Decies repetita placebit.*

"How reverend is the face of this tall pile,
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads,

To bear aloft its arch'd and pond'rous roof,
By its own weight made steadfast and immovable,
Looking tranquillity. It strikes an awe
And terror on my aching sight: the tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And shoot a chillness to my trembling heart.
Give me thy hand, and let me hear thy voice;
Nay, quickly speak to me, and let me hear
Thy voice. My own affrights me with its echoes."

But Congreve, as a poet, has a seat the proudest that a poet can occupy; nor should we be indifferent to a sentiment because, from the hour it was first heard, it has flowed from the lips of every woman at all tinctured with letters. I allude to his eulogy on music:

"Music has charms," etc.

His fancy and his sentiment, as Shakespeare says, "mingle" frequently "their spurs together:"

"The circling hours that gather all the woes,
Which are diffus'd thro' the revolving year,
Come heavy laden with th' oppressing weight
To me; with me successively they leave
The sighs, the tears, the groans, the restless cares,
And all the damps of grief that did retard their flight;
They shake their downy wings, and scatter all
The dire collected dues on my poor head;
Then fly with joy and swiftness from me."

The fond astonishment of Osmyn bursts into language beyond measure beautiful:

"Rivet and nail me where I stand, ye Powers,
That motionless I may be still deceiv'd.
Let me not stir, nor breathe, lest I dissolve
That tender lovely form of painted air,
So like Almeria."

"But the reader in these passages is reminded of Shakespeare!" Need Congreve shrink from the competition?

For the glow of feminine transport was anything ever written with more sweetness, delicacy, and pathos, than the following?

"O, how hast thou return'd? How hast thou charm'd
The wildness of the waves and rocks to this?
That thus relenting, they have giv'n thee back
To earth, to light, and life, to love and me!"

But Congreve added regularity of fable to all his other merits, and a truly excellent critic long since observed that the usual censure upon our drama did not apply to him. "From the foregoing censure must be excepted 'The Mourning Bride' of Congreve, where regularity concurs with the beauty of sentiment and language to make it one of the most complete pieces England has to boast of."[1]

I therefore call for an attentive reconsideration of this neglected tragedy. I do not mean as to the stage, for now we could not act it, but in the

[1] Ld. Kames, "Elements of Criticism," Vol. iii. p. 324. (Edin. 1763.)

closet; to which I find his comedies have been condemned by the flippant school, on the pretence of their indecency. If the free passages in this author were expunged, would all comedy, from his day to ours, equal the wit remaining, even in quantity? But he was a first-rate genius in everything, and perhaps few of my readers know that he has bestowed the utmost beauty upon a trifle such as the candle burning before a lover contemplating the perfections of his mistress. The terms chosen will be found to apply equally to the principal and the representative subject. This is the character of his wit and all true wit. But in a purely dramatic treatise its place must be a note.[1]

Lest the reader should suspect my impartiality,

[1] "TO A CANDLE.

ELEGY.

Thou watchful taper, by whose silent light
I lonely pass the melancholy night;
Thou faithful witness of my secret pain,
To whom alone I venture to complain;
O learn with me my hopeless love to moan;
Commiserate a life so like thy own.
Like thine, my flames to my destruction turn,
Wasting that heart, by which supply'd they burn.
Like thine, my joy and suffering they display,
At once are signs of life, and symptoms of decay.
And as thy fearful flames the day decline,
And only during night presume to shine;
Their humble rays not daring to aspire
Before the sun, the fountain of their fire:

I will point out one instance where the imperfect expression of the author's idea renders even the solemnity of prayer itself ludicrous. It is in the first scene of his third act, where Osmyn reads a paper in the handwriting of his father, which that graceless spouter, Dick, the Apprentice, converts into a note of hand. The venerable man would pray that the number of mercies bestowed by Heaven upon his son may double that of the hairs which sorrow rends from his own aged head. As the poet has left it, he invokes for him only a twofold quantity of hair, *e.g.*:

> "Let every hair, which sorrow by the roots
> Tears from my hoary and devoted head,
> Be doubled in thy mercies to my son."

Another objection I make to a part of his catastrophe. It was necessary to Congreve that his king should be found headless; as Cloten decapitated is, in Shakespeare, mistaken for Posthumus: but Congreve's king is haggled in a disgusting manner by the officious cunning of a creature of

> So mine, with conscious shame and equal awe,
> To shades obscure and solitude withdraw;
> Nor dare their light before her eyes disclose,
> From whose bright beams their being first arose."

Here we have none of the perverse ingenuity of the metaphysical poets. The points of contact seem obvious, and not to be missed; but such a parallel, so continued and so exact, was never made out before.

his favourite. In "Cymbeline" Guiderius, who had been assailed by Cloten dressed like Posthumus, is told by him that he is the queen's son; but this circumstance, so far from alarming the young hero, he treats thus contemptuously:

> "I have sent Cloten's clotpole down the stream
> In embassy to his mother: his body's hostage
> For his return."

One is the result of a fair combat in times comparatively barbarous. In all other parts of Congreve's business the manners are refined. To disgust in tragedy is almost fatal. The very stratagem of a king's hiding himself to surprise and reproach his mistress is below the dignity of tragedy, though countenanced by Addison as far as disguising Sempronius in the Numidian garb of Juba.

But even Congreve may detain us too long when Mrs. Siddons is waiting. I hasten to examine what his Zara and her representative reciprocally did for each other. The character is admirably described by its author, in the person of Osmyn. She has a soul of an intrepid and commanding cast, that challenges esteem even where she cannot be loved. Her personal are equal to her mental charms, but her passions are more furious than the winds, and uproot and scatter her virtues, as the hurricane ploughs the ocean and rears its waters into mountains of de-

struction. I can safely say that such a being Mrs. Siddons was on the first night of her Zara, — but these are the mere outlines of the delineation; they were filled up as firmly as they were drawn.

On her entrance as a captive, the glance upon her chains, and the remark upon captivity, expressed the quality of her mind admirably:

> "But when I feel
> These bonds, I look with loathing on myself."

Still more impressive, because steadier, was the ensuing acknowledgment:

> "Such thanks as one hating to be oblig'd —
> Yet hating more ingratitude — can pay,
> I offer."

Her eagerness to cover the indiscretion of Osmyn, and explain favourably a rather ambiguous exclamation of his, her throwing in the word Heli, in answer to the king, were skilful in the extreme.

The ninth scene, after Almeria has quitted Osmyn, her manner of coming in upon his meditation, —

> "See where he stands, folded and fix'd to earth,
> Stiff'ning in thought; a statue among statues," —

the tender expostulation, warming into reproach, and flaming into menace, with all the winning and alarming gradations of language, till the distinct

proposal of herself to him is ultimately tried, and on his rejection of freedom and her love, she exclaims, —

"Thou can'st not mean so poorly as thou talk'st," —

were as truly displayed by the actress as they are suggested by the author. Nor was she less delightful when her self-love made her detect the passion of Osmyn, but mistake its object, till she settles in the conviction that her charms have "pierced his very soul," but that his dastard nature recoils from the danger of becoming a rival to the king.

The following act shows a remission of her anger, and however he shall decide as to her love she considers herself bound to restore to him that liberty of which her charge to the king had deprived him. How beautifully she extenuates her fault! —

"Can'st thou forgive me, then? wilt thou believe
So kindly of my fault to call it madness?
O give that madness yet a milder name,
And call it passion; then be still more kind,
And call that passion love."

But the film that self-love has drawn over her eyes is forcibly dispelled in the third act, when, about to visit Osmyn, she is requested to suspend her entrance until the Princess Almeria shall have retired. At first she dissembles with him, and

then insults him coolly; but upon his exclaiming, —

> " You do not come to mock my miseries? "—

she says fiercely, "I do," and loads him with the most opprobrious language. To her threat of procuring his death, Osmyn calmly replies, "I thank you." The points now come home in their altercation, and are admirably contrasted:

> ". . . Thou ly'st; for now I know for whom thou'dst live.
> *Osm.* Then you may know for whom I'd die."

Zara is now in the highest state of exasperation, and the actress looked the truism with which she concludes the act:

> " Heav'n has no rage like love to hatred turn'd,
> Nor Hell a fury like a woman scorn'd."

If the sorrows of Almeria had then moved in the majestic form and silver tones of Mrs. Yates, the perfect contrast of two women so accomplished, with even the Osmyn of Smith, would have carried imperial tragedy higher than it probably ever went in any age or nation.

The author has, however, avoided any scene of personal struggle between his heroines, though I think he would have left Rowe a model that might have saved him from the disgraceful ravings of Alicia. The plot now proceeds with great

haste, and the ultimate feelings of Zara are consoling. She swallows the poison deliberately, which she supposes will unite her to Osmyn, and the actress was excellently "studied in her death," — perhaps no performer ever threw so much variety into the close of dramatic existence.

Having now, I trust, shown this pantomime to be replete with description, sentiment, and passion, I turn to another class of objectors, who, admitting all these, contend we have too much of them, and find ourselves in consequence more pained than pleased. But the abundance of Congreve must not be supposed to diminish the lustre of his figures or sentiments; they are admirable, however numerous.

> "Men doubt, because they stand so thick i' the sky,
> If those be stars which paint the galaxy."

But in all such cases it is we who should endeavour to rise to the affluence of the poet, rather than wish him brought down to the penury of our ideas. The crowded thoughts and splendid diction of Shakespeare must not, for vulgar apprehension, be lowered into the homely chat of Heywood.

CHAPTER XII.

THE management of Drury Lane Theatre, in allowing Mrs. Siddons an extra night in the month of March, 1783, had, in fact, given but little out of their own funds, though, from the great extent of her fashionable connection, they put the actress in the receipt of a large accession to her established salary. On this night seven rows of the pit were laid into the boxes, and her book, as it lay open in the lobby, was literally the Court Guide.

That benefit produced to Mrs. Siddons no less a sum than £650, but then Lady Spencer gave ninety guineas for her side box, and Lady Aylesbury a bank-note of £50 for an upper box.

A desire to preserve all reasonable continuity in this narrative has compelled me to omit, in the series of dramatic events, some that claim this supplemental record. On the 14th of January expired a very prominent character, the delight of former times, whose cognomen was the sign of merriment and the prelude of harmony. The reader, to be sure, anticipates the person of Old Cervetto, who, at the age of one hundred and

two, resigned all the noisy honours of his nose. He played the double bass in the band for many years, and was the father of the great violoncello player. He came to England in the year of the hard frost, and was then an old man. I am afraid his successors in the orchestra have been but slightly accomplished to succeed him; but under the original call for Nosy, or Nozée, his fame yet survives, though that of the trunkmaker excites no longer noise among us.

Mr. Cumberland has a name in the drama which demands attention to every effort not very much below himself. "The Mysterious Husband," acted at Covent Garden on the 28th of January, is in many respects one of his best productions. Before the play went into rehearsal, he brought it to Henderson's house to read it to him. Mrs. Henderson, with a very natural feeling, exclaimed to him: "Well, Mr. Cumberland, I hope at last you will allow Mr. Henderson to be good for something on the stage." "Madam," replied the poet, "I can't afford it — a villain he must be." And, to be sure, of all the causeless depravity in the great moral massacre of the English tragedy, the character of Lord Davenant, in the present play, affords the completest specimen. It seems to have been suggested by Lord Orford's "Mysterious Mother," which had been printed in 1768 at Strawberry Hill, and presented to his friends, with the express stipulation that neither Garrick

nor Doctor Johnson should be permitted to read it. The doctor would call this a "very angry, but unnecessary prohibition." It would severely mortify Mr. Garrick, who, however idly, hoped for universal esteem.

I do not wonder that Walpole, when, in 1781, he consented to a publication of this play from his own copy, pronounced a subject so horrid unsuited to the stage; and it should be remembered that, in horrors, "The Mysterious Mother" greatly transcends either Phædra or Jocasta. But the nervous dignity of its composition will for ever delight in the closet. Yet, when we have in the mind's eye such an actress as Mrs. Siddons, it is impossible to read some of its passages without attempting to conceive the astonishing effect they must receive from her look and utterance. The fifth scene of the first act, where an artful friar is endeavouring to worm out the cause of her remorse that he may be master of her wealth, offers a few points that are irresistible, among many that are fine.

"*Bened.* The Church could seal
Your pardon, but you scorn it. In your pride
Consists your danger. Yours are pagan virtues.
Countess. Father, my crimes are pagan: my belief
Too orthodox to trust to erring man."

When the reader who has known this magician in her strength has a little considered the effect of

one word in this reply, he may be disposed to go on with her in a speech so calculated for her powers:

"What! shall I, foul with guilt, and self-condemn'd,
Presume to kneel where angels kneel appall'd,
And plead a priest's certificate for pardon?
While he, perchance, before my blasted eyes
Shall sink to woes endless, unutterable,
For having fool'd me into that presumption.
Bened. Is he to blame, trusting to what he grants?
Countess. Am I to blame, not trusting what he grants?"

Nor is the power of the poet at all weakened to the very end of the first act; where, with some of the forms and more of the spirit, he adopts the interrogative style of Cato to Labienus in the ninth book of Lucan. Of its forms in the outset:

"*Countess.* Good father, wherefore? what should I inquire?
Must I be taught of him, that guilt is woe;
That innocence alone is happiness?"

Of its spirit about the middle of her speech:

"We want no preacher to distinguish vice
From virtue. At our birth the god reveal'd
All conscience needs to know." [1]

[1] "Quid quæri, Labiene, jubes? an liber in armis
Occubuisse velim, potius quam regna videre?
An noceat vis ulla bono?" etc.

. . . . . .

As Mr. Cumberland chose a slighter degree of incest for the subject of his play, I wish he had not written it in prose, and that, with the dexterity of Walpole, he had thrown the occurrence back a few centuries. In hearing or reading the vices of another and distant age, we have a two-fold consolation: an involuntary suspicion that the facts may never have been true; and a voluntary belief that our own times exhibit nothing like them.

A slight sketch of the interest will illustrate and justify this remark. Davenant, already a widower, marries the daughter of Sir Edmund Travers; she had a former attachment, but his lordship gets his rival a ship, and sends him upon a distant discovery, perhaps to the North Pole. In a ramble to Spa, Davenant meets with the sister of this very captain, and under another name marries her. After a short cohabitation he quits her, and from Paris transmits to her an account of his own death. The second wife, conceiving herself a widow, comes to England, and marries clandestinely the son of Davenant. On the morning of her marriage, she accidentally see her first husband, his father. The circum-

> "Nil agimus nisi sponte dei, non vocibus ullis
> Numen eget, dixitque semel nascentibus autor
> Quicquid scire licet." — *Pharsal.*, Lib. ix.

Rowe, though even alarmingly paraphrastical, has done this whole speech of Cato with the vigour and majestic ease of Dryden himself.

stances are at length disclosed by Lady Davenant to the "precious villain," her husband, who from desperation destroys himself, and so removes the only bar to the happiness of the survivors. Yet the sort of happiness is enviable, and should be preserved as a dramatic rarity. Dormer, the discoverer, comes back to take the command of the real Lady Davenant, and the son has to forget, if possible, that his father was born before him.

Henderson was amazingly terrible with all these horrors about him; and Miss Younge delightful in the suffering and excellent Lady Davenant. She had a sensible patience in her composition, a dignity in misfortune quite unaffected; and in all her range, and it was a very wide one, never shone more than in the meek endurance of a brutal or profligate husband. This it was that almost rendered her sublime in the Countess of Narbonne. Sir Edmund Travers, a character of odd humour, acted by Yates in this play, showed a peculiar comedy, which we now happily preserve in Dowton; from its chasteness it will combine with tragedy, at a proper distance from the catastrophe.

On the following night Mr. Pratt, whose "Fair Circassian" has been mentioned, followed up his serious success by a comic failure; it was called "The School for Vanity." Among the extraordinary events, a baronet is saved from drowning by an alderman (!) of the name of Ingot. Such

an incident passed even dramatic credibility. "For the water swells a man, and what a thing should I have been when I had been swoln! I should have been a mountain of mummy."

Miss Farren performed a very tender orphan, named Ophelia, and Miss Philips (her real fate too) had a swain insensible to her beauty; a song thrown into the part was much admired, but the school broke up for a long vacation, when the tiresome lesson of vanity ended.

Miss. E. Kemble, another sister of Mrs. Siddons, made an appearance in Portia, notwithstanding "her greater" had done so little in it seven years before. This lady more resembled Mrs. Siddons in her person and countenance than Miss Kemble did, and was certainly a better actress. However, she was not brought so forward in the arrangements of the theatre; and, if I am correct, only once repeated Portia, and then was untroubled by the call-boy for the rest of the season. Her elder sister, Frances, beside the tragic seconds to the Siddons, was one night tried in Beatrice; but the audience were rather cruel, for their censure anticipated the first sentence pronounced by her.

The reader will easily imagine that these ladies could not expect to be received upon the footing of their actual merits. They were thwarted by the fears of the whole dramatic body. If the influence of Mrs. Siddons equalled her talent, what was to be expected but an invasion of her whole

family, male and female, which, as it was certainly numerous, would swallow up all business worth doing in the theatre? At Drury Lane Theatre it was now known that Mr. Kemble might be expected, and that from his provincial success he would occupy the first place in tragedy or none. When we consider, therefore, the jealousy peculiar to this profession, and the interest, equally peculiar, that it excites in others, we can see no inconsiderable numbers among the frequenters of the playhouse strongly prejudiced against the family.

It is very natural for a lady addicted to dramatic composition to look to the authors of her own sex with partiality. It is thus we see the "Bold Stroke for a Wife," of Mrs. Centlivre, suggesting to Mrs. Cowley "A Bold Stroke for a Husband," — a comedy which she brought out at Covent Garden Theatre on the 25th of February, 1783. This play labours with two distinct interests, which a very little attention might have woven into each other. One of them is the common girlish expedient of disgusting a variety of known suitors in favour of one unknown. The pleasantest point here was the father locking the daughter up, and upon his leaving the room, her lover starting suddenly from his concealment. The girl, upon her surprise, screams aloud; while the father is heard on the stairs to say, "Ay, ay, you may scream, but there you shall stay, miss," or something like

it. The other is the trite expedient (I mean on the stage, for in real life nothing, perhaps, of the sort ever occurred) of a neglected wife going *en cavalier* to her husband's mistress to learn how to captivate. The mistress naturally falling in love with this wife, who can play to the life any part but her own, in her fondness possesses her of all the "conveyances" which her husband had made to the prejudice of his family.

It is a common observation that the writings of the ladies do not shun the broadest latitude taken by the other sex; and so indifferent, for the most part, do they seem to their peculiar interests, that they luxuriate in the description of a gay agreeable profligate. They would inspire constancy, but they paint the rover; in their most perfect characters the heart always pants for pleasure. But this I learn is the creed, as well as practice, among the dramatists of the fair sex. The female friend who sketches the character of Mrs. Behn speaks out upon the subject: "She was a woman of sense, and consequently a lover of pleasure." We have had four ladies eminent among our comic writers, — Behn, Centlivre, Cowley, and Inchbald; and a not very rigid moralist would strike out much from the writings of each of them.

I presume an admirer of either lady, who had composed and addressed a poem called the "Comic Muse," would have incurred no blame. Russel, the author of a "History of Modern Europe," and

other ingenious works, now published a poem called the "Tragic Muse," with which he complimented Mrs. Siddons. He was severely reproved by the critics for "wasting his verse upon excellence that was in its nature fugitive, the meteor of the moment." A more liberal feeling might have applauded even an endeavour to give some little fame beyond the memories of contemporary admirers. There is something grateful in the very notion that verse is trying to repay some of the charm it has derived from the organs of the actress. And surely if, in the language of either Cibber or Lloyd or Sheridan, the art of the great actor leaves no memorial, unlike every other effort of genius, we are doubly called upon to perpetuate what we can of gifts so singularly circumscribed; not as some would represent them, the mere mimicry of man, but arising out of the most vivid imagination of his nature, passions, and habits, and a power of becoming steadily all that the fancy suggests as constituting any individual existence.

Mrs. Siddons having acted for the benefits of the four leading actors in tragedy, Messrs. Smith, Palmer, Bensley, and Brereton, during her first brilliant season, on the 19th of May performed Shore for the Theatrical Fund. This was followed by a repetition of Zara on her sister's night; and on the 5th of June, with Isabella, for the twenty-third time, the doors of Drury Lane playhouse

"Shut up in measureless content."

In looking to the comparative popularity of the characters acted by Mrs. Siddons, the triumph was unquestionably with Southern's Isabella, which she played twenty-two times in her first season. Rowe, to his Jane Shore and Calista, had of each fourteen performances; Otway's exquisite Belvidera had thirteen repetitions; Murphy eleven for his "Grecian Daughter;" Congreve's Zara was acted thrice, and she kept her friend Hull's "Fatal Interview" alive till the author's third day. Neither his own merits nor those of his heroine could do more for this weak imitation of Lillo in prose. We are here presented with the astonishing total of eighty performances in one season of characters full of emotion and fatigue, an effort beyond any parallel, and as to excellence beyond all praise.

Nor was any rest allowed our charming actress. On the 9th of June, in company with the Brerétons, she set off post for Ireland; the party took up F. Aickin by the way, and pursued their journey to the sister kingdom. She was now anxious to join her brother, Mr. Kemble, who had already signed an article for three years with the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre.

We have now leisure to turn ourselves to look at the Haymarket, with its grand and "little" theatres; and as all foreign concerns, to this or any other work, should be out of the way as speedily as possible, we shall look first at that shameless prodigy, the Opera House. A few

months only are past since I read some motion or other respecting the late proprietor, Mr. Taylor; I have now under my eye a notice, heading the bill of the night, in that year, 1783, calling his creditors together to meet the trustees of the concern. He was then in such a state as to be utterly unable to go on; but, on "a certain ground," he permitted the performers to continue the entertainments for their own advantage from the 22d of May to the end of the season. The nobility and gentry had already given one subscription for the relief of the deluded artists, who had come over in the fair exercise of first-rate talents; and a second was now set on foot, at five guineas for twelve operas. I have brought these two facts together that the reader may reflect upon the mysteries of equity, by which a shuffling concern can thus be kept litigiously alive for forty years together.

In the season of 1782–83, the opera was crowded to excess. One o'clock in the morning did not see the Haymarket clear of the carriages, and the stage had every fascination both in the serious and comic opera. Pacchierotti, the most pathetic singer in the world, was executing the divine music of Sarti, — perhaps not fully supported as to a first woman, — for neither Carnevale nor Morigi had sufficient power for so great a master, and they slighted the recitativo, a thing inexcusable indeed in Italians who know its value. But, what so seldom happens, the comic opera

was now quite equal in attraction to the serious. The graceful hilarity and taste of Viganoni were seconded by a *prima buffa*, whom no time has approached in all the requisites; I mean the Allegranti. In ballet there were Le Picq and Slingsby, and for their ladies Rossi; and Theodore, who was the Allegranti of the dance. The house itself, too, had been enlarged, and rendered splendid beyond everything known. His present Majesty, then Prince of Wales, graced it frequently by his presence, with other branches of his illustrious family, and the principal nobility had boxes; and yet, from the hard and dogged vulgarity of one man, who had got into the property, nothing but disgrace and ruin attended the concern.

The "little manager," as he delighted to style himself,[1] but who occupied no small space in the eye of taste, was this season induced to beautify his pigmy palace. The friendly journals celebrated his balustrades and his pillars, his paper and his paint, not forgetting his frontispiece, with its new motto, of which the ominous word *serpentem* was omitted, and the spectator read only:

"Spectas, et tu spectabere."

Our recent encampments all over the country suggested a military allusion on his opening. As

[1] Small though his talents, smaller than his size,
Beneath your smiles his little Lares rise.
— *Prol. at opening.*

an article, certainly from Colman, it merits preservation. He begins with his triumph in the recent publication of the "Art of Poetry."

"INTELLIGENCE EXTRAORDINARY.

"(From the Camp just forming in the Haymarket.)

"Town Major Colman, who has just given the public a very elegant theory of his art, will reduce it into practice by opening the summer campaign with some of the best troops that can be mustered from the two garrisons, which have been on duty during the course of the winter, as well as others from country cantonments.

"The following is the disposition of the encampment:

"Major-General Palmer is to head the principal division, in which he is to be supported by Colonels Aickin, Bensley, Bannister, jun., etc.

"The Hah! hah! Pioneers to consist of Captains Edwin, Parsons, Wewitzer, Baddeley, Massey, and R. Palmer.

"This corps will likewise be joined by Captain Wilson, who, in consequence of many gallant engagements, had received a violent contusion in his leg, but is now so well recovered as to be able to stand his duty.

"The heavy cavalry will be led by the Webbes, two officers of as much personal weight as any in the field.

"The light troops by Mrs. Bulkeley, Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Wells, Miss Hale, etc.

"Necessary woman to the Buskin and Sock Heroines, Mrs. Poussin.

"The band of music to be composed of Messrs. Bannister, Brett, Wood, Mrs. Bannister, and Miss George from the pipe office, Oxford.

"Besides the above band, several outdoor trumpeters will occasionally entertain the town with the celebrated anthem of 'Te dominum theatri laudamus.'

"Chasseurs and Light Infantry, Master and Miss Byrne, etc., etc.

"For an account of the names of the Artillery, that is to say, thunder and lightning men, rain-showerers, camp-shifters, etc., *vide* the orderly books of the company.

"N. B. The site of the old Camp is considerably enlarged, by removing the pallisados, etc. The tents are all new painted; and the whole encampment, under the direction of the able engineer Rooker, cuts a very brilliant and soldier-like appearance."

And thus, in those days, a manager could show his company before and behind the curtain that he had the right of wit to entertain them, and affirm his judgment as to the efforts of other authors by his own powers of performance.

Colman knew how contemptible the new theatrical disease was, of altering boxes and avenues, and calling the thing a new theatre. Though he felt himself, according to the laws of proportion, bound to vie with his antagonists in this vanity of the art, he yet taught his own audiences to laugh at it on his first night of opening:

"What tho' our house be three-score years of age,
Let us new-vamp the box, new-lay the stage;
Long paragraphs shall paint, with proud parade,
The gilded front, and airy balustrade;
While on each post the flaming bill displays
Our old new theatre, and new old plays."

The Miss George alluded to proved a very pleasing singer and very respectable actress. One

of the earliest novelties produced by the manager was a comedy called, "A Friend in Need Is a Friend Indeed!" — a first and only dramatic attempt by Mr. D. O'Brien, so well known as the zealous friend of Charles Fox. It produced some public altercation between Mr. Colman and the author, and eight nights' performance but slightly connected with each other. A ninth night was at length yielded by the manager, to verify the title, and then this *rara avis* suddenly disappeared. O'micron Brien yielded to O'mega Keefe. "The Young Quaker" of the latter, the loves of Reuben Sadboy and Dinah Primrose, amused the town and seem to have strongly interested the manager, for he wrote both prologue and epilogue himself.

O'Keefe wrote a trifle in two acts for the birthday of the Prince of Wales (our present most gracious sovereign), called "The Prince of Arragon;" and the compliment paid is that, the royalty about him undeclared, he is preferred to the presumed prince. The great personage to whom this tribute was paid always announced his rank in his appearance.

On the 19th of August, a comedy in two acts was brought out for Mrs. Bulkeley's benefit, called "The Lawyer;" who, as a critic of the day said, with as much *naïveté* as truth, drew tears from all present.

I cannot allow this season to close without stating the very singular pleasure I received from

seeing, on the 12th of September, that master-work of Jonson, "The Fox," acted under the auspices of Mr. Colman. Bensley and Parsons were by nature fitted for Mosca and Corbaccio, and Palmer took, I thought, very kindly to Volpone. Bannister gave to Voltore more of the modern than the ancient advocate; but he excited a laugh at some well-known excesses of our bar, — affectations rendering oratorial imperfection violent absurdity. Mr. Gifford, the matchless editor of Jonson, remembers the representation to which I allude, and thus expresses himself (see his 3d vol., p. 160): "Its last appearance, I believe, was at the Haymarket, some time before the death of the elder Colman, who made some trifling alterations in the disposition of the scenes. That it was not successful, cannot be wondered at; the age of dramatic imbecility was rapidly advancing upon us, and the stage already looked to jointed dolls, water-spaniels, and peacocks' tails for its main credit and support."

As far as his manly censure stigmatises the degeneracy into which personal avarice has plunged what should be the seat of taste, I copy him with a feeling of respectful acquiescence; but I cannot think the representation of "The Fox" then unsuccessful. It was acted on Friday, the 12th of September, repeated on Saturday, the 13th, and on the 15th the theatre closed for the season with the last new comedy. It was a profitable

season on the whole. With the thermometer at 82, an additional ventilator had rendered the house as pleasant at least as any other; and for once trusting entirely to Rooker for decorations, the "little manager" wrote nothing himself for the town but a few prologues.

Before I notice the winter theatres, I must recall to the reader's recollection the very strange and unmanly criticism which had assailed that sister of Mrs. Siddons who acted with her in "Jane Shore" and "The Mourning Bride." The terms in which our critic expressed himself savoured of insane hatred. He challenged any one human being to pronounce her other than the most detestable of actresses. While she was in Ireland, he had not suffered her to enjoy the usual privileges of absence, but had kept up his vituperation by a pretended report of what she was doing in the sister kingdom.

I had the happiness to meet the late Mrs. Twiss at her brother's, and can therefore speak on absolute knowledge to her gentle manners and the loveliness of her person. I cannot doubt that she stepped with reluctance on board the packet that was to bring her back to the daily annoyance of her London critic. Her merits of every kind had, however, attracted the attention and secured the friendship of George Steevens, Esquire, the celebrated commentator on Shakespeare, and he inflicted upon her unmanly assailant one of the

severest punishments that can be borne, — the chastisement of genius. It bears his peculiar stamp on every line of it. I am sure, at that time, his heart governed his pen at least as much as his justice. The fugitive efforts of Steevens are innumerable, but they have never been collected, however easily distinguished. The manner of this address to Woodfall is so temperate, the topics so well chosen and so feelingly touched, that I must lay it before the reader entire. It will, I hope, have an effect beyond its immediate object, — future Rosciads and Clios and other masqueraders of malignity may thus be startled into reflection, and withhold the tortures of the press, which are here so keenly marked and so earnestly deprecated :

"MISS KEMBLE.

"SIR : — Among the motives that divest criticism of its rigour none has hitherto been reckoned more prevalent than our habitual tenderness to the fair sex. Even reviewers abate somewhat of their asperity when they decide on the qualifications of a female writer :

"'Tempests themselves, high seas and howling winds,
The gutter'd rocks and congregated sands,
(Traitors ensteep'd to clog the guiltless keel)
As having sense of beauty do omit
Their mortal natures, letting go safely by
The divine Desdemona.'

"I wish, Mr. Woodfall, I could add that your theatrical agent had been influenced by similar considerations. His

repeated and unaccountable severities respecting Miss Kemble have shown that he at least is unaffected by any such 'compunctious visitings of nature.' Throughout the course of last winter, as frequently as he found occasion to speak of this amiable girl, his remarks rather wore the aspect of personal resentment than of impartial criticism. His malignity pursued her even into Ireland. He might have allowed Mrs. Siddons her just dividend of fame without introducing comparisons between her and her sister; that is, between acting which is the result of more than ten years' practice and the less experienced efforts of a young performer. Mrs. Siddons, I am sure, would return but cold acknowledgments for praise at the expense of one whose welfare is so intimately connected with her own. Neither does confirmed excellence require the sacrifice of all subordinate pretensions. It is by no means necessary to the brightness of the moon that each inferior planet should be extinguished.

"But, perhaps, it will be said that every candidate for public favour is liable to public animadversion. It may be added, however, that critical like legal justice should be dealt out in exact proportion to offence, and not without regard to private character, especially when the interests of a blameless female are at stake. The severity even of Roman justice allowed exclusive privileges to the vestal. But the headlong author of the playhouse articles in your paper, sir, makes no distinction in his usage of the abandoned wanton who seeks the stage as an asylum, when her vices have disqualified her for every other way of life, and the girl of unsullied manners who becomes an actress through the hope of deriving creditable support from her profession. Surely two characters so discriminated might expect an opposite treatment. The first has, probably, lulled those sensibilities which are tremblingly awake in the second. Not driven by necessity from one trade to the

exercise of another, and therefore unhardened by degrees to censure, such a one feels, severely feels, every sting of reproach, and is agonised by the paragraph or critique which a hackneyed appendage to the scenes would peruse without emotion.

"Nor does this cruel mode of passing a premature sentence on the disciples of the drama operate only against their private happiness. A degree of self-confidence is necessary toward every undertaking; but, when juvenile performers are completely humbled in their own estimation, their solicitude for improvement is at an end. Let me ask our critic what his own feelings would suggest were he of this forlorn hope, and compelled to represent at night the very character in which he had been condemned without mercy in one of our morning papers. Must not then an innocent girl suffer yet more exquisitely from the same distress? Will she not think she hears the enemy's voice in every casual sound that disturbs the theatre, and find her powers irrecoverably blasted by the dread of yet more forcible disapprobation? Is there (I appeal to your own breast, Mr. Woodfall) anything so mean, so vile, as triumph over a defenceless, unoffending woman? The money, in short, received by hirelings for exposing defects in a set of people whose subsistence depends on their favour with the public may almost be called the price of blood; for, as Shylock well expresses it, —

"'You take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live.'

"To the effects which newspaper acrimony, and its immediate contrast, the applause of an audience, have produced on Miss Kemble, your present correspondent, sir, is no stranger. Her eyes have streamed over the severities of the *Public Advertiser*, and her exertions have been successful when encouraged by those who took the liberty of judg

ing for themselves, without asking the author of 'Theatrical Intelligence' whether censure or commendation was due to her performances.

"I must conclude, Mr. Woodfall, by acknowledging the general vigilance and acuteness of your theatrical Argus, though humanity obliges me to disapprove the unremitted malice with which he has persecuted a young lady whose elegance of manners, whose blameless character, and whose ambition and power to delight support her claim to all the indulgence and protection a generous and candid public can afford. — I am, sir, your most obedient servant.

"P. S. — I wish, Mr. Woodfall, some of your numerous correspondents who have paid attention to playhouse matters would trace the literary persecution which has been continued with a kind of conspiracy against the performers of both theatres to its original source. About twenty years ago the demerit of an actor could be understood only by those who saw him, or heard of him in conversation. I own I cannot help being desirous that the name of the first of our stage inquisitors should be divulged, like that of the brazen bull founder, for the information of posterity, that players yet unborn may know to whom they are indebted for the cruel treatment they are almost sure to experience in the course of their best endeavours to entertain the public."

"The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo," and, therefore, I do not insert Mr. Woodfall's addition to this powerful appeal. But so absolutely had he yielded to the forcible reasons of Steevens that he expresses his own regret for the past, and as to the future he promises that the imperfections of the ladies shall be touched without any brutal violence to their sensibility.

Mrs. Siddons had succeeded in Dublin almost beyond expectation, for the Irish neither did nor could be expected to resign at once their reigning favourite, Mrs. Crawford. She is believed to have carried away £1,100 from Dublin, about £700 from Cork, and on touching her native shores £160 at Liverpool. It now, therefore, assumed the appearance of certainty that she would reach a station more honourable than had yet been accorded to theatrical talent, and that her fortune would equally surpass what had ever been acquired by acting solely in this country.

The winter managers had not been indifferent even to the male part of this lady's family, and they had each of them engaged a Mr. Kemble from the Dublin Theatre. But the usual mode by which distinction in families is preserved in real life was disdained on this occasion. The elder brother alone was Mr. Kemble — the second should have attached the elucidation afforded by his Christian name. We have heard of those anomalies called "distinctions without a difference." The difference as to these brothers was great indeed. The only resemblance was in the style of the features, for the countenance of Mr. Stephen Kemble was certainly handsome, though not dark, like that of his elder brother. But his figure was encumbered with flesh, there was nothing of the heroic in his proportion; but had he personated Achilles, and shouted at the door of

his tent, he had equally struck a terror through the army, and probably the whole city of Troy.

He appeared on the 24th of September at Covent Garden Theatre in the character of Othello, and thus, by blackening his face, parted with his only agreeable distinction. But he had nothing of the subtle and discriminating character of his family, — at least it did not enter into his acting. He was a man of sense, and even of some literary attainment; but his declamation was coarse and noisy, and his vehement passion was too ungovernable for sympathy. Othello was, in one way, a fortune to him, for in the Desdemona of that evening, Miss Satchell, he found his real wife. Henderson's Iago was perhaps the crown of all his serious achievements, — the part in which other actors were left by him in the most hopeless condition. It was all profoundly intellectual, like the character. Anything near this I have never seen. A writer of great skill, though he does not agree with those who think Iago villainous without a sufficient motive, seems to me to be much too general when he finds it only in the love of power. He has two motives of no mean rank, professional ambition and jealousy. He has seen a counter-caster, a man with nothing but the theory of the soldier, put over his head; and he suspects the gallant Moor to have injured him in his bed. He punishes preference as inexpiable guilt, and suspicion in his nature goes the full length of cer-

tainty. His invention combines all his enemies in one plan of exquisite revenge, and he cares not though it should involve the innocent with the guilty. But his motives are clearly defined in his mischiefs, — he would destroy Cassio for his office, and Othello by that same jealousy which he had excited. No moral considerations thwart his designs, and among his means he has a fool for his purse-bearer. Iago has well estimated his powers of every kind, and descends from his proper sphere only for his sport or his profit. A master in all the arts of insinuation, his triumph is equally certain with the simple Roderigo, the brave, convivial Cassio, and the noble Moor, "all-sufficient" out of the territory of the passions.

The most perplexing difficulty in the art is to turn the inside of design outward to the spectators, and yet externally seem to be cordial and sincere and interesting among the victims, — it demands an instant versatility, that yet must not savour of trick. You must hear his insinuations with curses, and yet confess that you also would have been deceived. Other Iagos were to be seen through at once, — their success was incredible and impossible except upon wilful blindness.

I should notice upon the present occasion the very clever performance of Roderigo by Charles Bonner, then new to the London public; nothing could possibly come nearer to the manners of this silly gentleman. Shakespeare has afforded three

striking instances of fatuity in courtship, Roderigo, Master Slender, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek; yet observe their marked distinctions, and recognise in the poet an invention that almost keeps pace with the prodigality of nature.

The impatience of English audiences to come to the great interest has done some mischief in Othello; but enough was spared to show Roderigo stand tempering between the finger and thumb of Iago, in that exquisite scene where the master works him from the design of drowning himself to the more necessary evil of selling all his land. Eleven times does Iago recommend his pupil prey to "put money in his purse." With the skill to write as no other man ever thought of writing, Shakespeare, we may be sure, had actors capable of exhibiting perfectly all this mastery of art, — to make it untiring to the ear, as Henderson certainly did; and yet the injunction has only these slight variations: "Put money in thy purse." "Put *but* money in thy purse." "*Fill* thy purse with money." "*Make* all the money thou can'st." "*Provide* thy money." "Put money *enough* in thy purse."

In level earnest recitation I think Mr. Kemble surpassed all men; but in all the mellow varieties of ingenious or humourous or designing conversation, where the art is to conceal the art, and the most pungent effects are to flow in oil itself, nothing has approached Mr. Henderson; and now I

fear we have less chance than ever of such perfection, — the voice in large theatres is taken out of the scale for these delicate inflections of tone.

But, if the ambition of the family to occupy the highest ranks seemed a little checked by the rash enterprise of Mr. Stephen Kemble, the 30th of the same month gave to Mrs. Siddons the full triumph she had predicted in the success of her elder brother in the character of Hamlet. I have left myself little to remark in this place, having gone already very minutely and critically into that performance, and pointed out, I hope, with proper respect to other great men, the peculiar and original features of Mr. Kemble's Hamlet.[1]

I have never refused to myself in these memoirs the pleasures of even discursive if relevant criticism; and on the present occasion I feel strongly tempted to remark upon the recent appearance of a copy of "Hamlet" previously unknown, and printed for N. L. (Nicholas Ling) and John Trundell, 1603. Among a variety of curious readings, arising from whatever cause, it has one affecting a very important point in the performance of Mr. Kemble. If the reader has honoured me by making the reference which I last pointed out, he will see on one side all previous Hamlets exclaiming to Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo, with regard to the ghost, "Did you not speak to it?" and he will find Mr. Kemble alone selecting his friend and

[1] See "Memoirs of Mr. Kemble," Vol. i. p. 88.

schoolfellow Horatio for this interesting demand, and in a solemn and tender tone of voice thus deliberately mixing up his grief with his curiosity :

"Did YOU not *speak* to it."

Now the copy just alluded to, if genuine Shakespeare, would put an end to this ingenious point of my late friend, however applauded by Doctor Johnson, for thus is the passage exhibited in that impression of the play :

"*Ham.* Did you not speak to it?
Hor. My lord, WE did."

And thus, although the fuller and more correct impression of the year following (1604) made Horatio take the replication entirely to himself, "My lord, I did," yet Mr. Steevens would have been greatly strengthened in the objection he made to Mr. Kemble's emphasis, which rested on what he thought would be awkward construction if so spoken, namely, with the personal pronoun preceding the negative, —

"Did YOU *not* speak to it?"

The very use of the term *we* by Horatio would have seemed to him to prove decisively that, though it was better for Horatio to say "*I* did," than "*we* did," it never had entered the mind of Shakespeare to build a peculiar and endearing question to Ho-

ratio, grounded on their college intimacy, and the suspicions that might have tinged their evening or morning conferences at Witemberg.

But had Mr. Kemble lived to enjoy this singular curiosity, he would, perhaps, triumphantly have affirmed that a copy that possessed so many passages of absolute guess at the real text, and others of premises without their conclusions, if it were allowed to confirm the usage of a word, was an unsafe guide as to meaning. He would have quoted from it:

"*Ham.* O that this too much griev'd and sallied flesh
Would melt to nothing, or that the universall
Globe of heaven would turne al to a chaos."

And further on in the play:

"*Ghost.* O I find thee apt, and duller should'st thou be
Then the fat weede which rootes it self in ease
On Lethe wharffe: breife let me be."

Where the necessity of quickly hurrying the stolen matter together has left the point antagonised out of the phrase; for the reader knows it should stand:

"And duller should'st thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Would'st thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear."

But the furtive rogues were bold indeed when they audaciously gave us the following for the

well-known address of the sovereign to Hamlet's two friends, whom he calls Rossencraft and Gilderstone :

"*King.* Right noble friends, that our deere cousin Hamlet
Hath lost the very heart of all his sence,
It is most right, and we most sory for him."

But his Majesty, however earnestly he conjures the services of these courtiers, seems to make light of them by the unfortunate employment of the difficult word "but," —

"Therefore we doe desire, even as you tender
Our care to him, and our great love to you,
That you will labour but to wring from him
The cause and ground of his distemperancie.
Doe this, the King of Denmarke shal be thankfull."

A comparison of this with original Shakespeare, from the absence of all resemblance except in the design of the speaker, must confirm a suspicion that here our vamper of "Hamlet" used the actual words of a very miserable play upon the subject which preceded the mighty performance of Shakespeare several years; and was, Mr. Malone thinks, the work of sporting Kyd, as Ben Jonson calls him, rather perhaps from his name than his character. It would be, I confess, with some feeling of alarm that I should take up Kyd's play, were it in existence, in the fear that

he might be entitled to any portion of our poet's fame, for even a first and rough sketch of the awful shade of Denmark. Yet it would be wrong to withhold from Shakespeare's predecessor, whoever he was, the credit, so justly his own, of being the most attentive observer of decorum. The closet scene of the senior play is regulated with the exactest propriety. Instead of bursting in upon the conference between the queen and her son, held in the private chamber of her Majesty, in the frightful armour worn by him when he combated Norway, we are instructed to dress the late king more suitably for such a place: "Enter the Ghost in his night gowne." He has also furnished his queen with an explicit disclaimer of all participation in the murder of her first husband:

> "But as I have a soule, I sweare by heaven,
> I never knew of this most horride murder."

Nor should the familiar language in which it is conveyed diminish our regard for so comfortable an assurance. In the meanwhile, the controversy between the poet's commentators may remain in its full force, and her guilt or innocence be doubtful to the end of time, or end of the poet's fame, which some may consider the same date.

It was now that Mrs. Siddons paid a visit to Doctor Johnson. We have happily his own account of it in a letter to Mrs. Thrale, dated Octo-

ber the 27th, 1783. From the abrupt commencement, Mrs. Thrale seems to have been apprised either of the intention or the visit. "Mrs. Siddons in her visit to me behaved with great modesty and propriety, and left nothing behind her to be censured or despised. Neither praise nor money, the two powerful corrupters of mankind, seem to have depraved her. I shall be glad to see her again. Mrs. Siddons and I talked of plays, and she told me of her intention of exhibiting this winter the characters of Constance, Katharine, and Isabella, in Shakespeare."

When Mrs. Siddons came into the room there happened to be no chair ready for her. "Madam," said Johnson, with a smile, "you who so often occasion a want of seats to other people will the more easily excuse the want of one yourself." He inquired with which of Shakespeare's characters she was most pleased. Upon her answering that she thought the character of Queen Katharine, in "Henry the Eighth," the most natural, "I think so too, madam," said he; "and whenever you perform it, I will once more hobble out to the theatre myself."

Little as the doctor could either see or hear in a theatre, I regret that he did not witness the performance of Katharine by Mrs. Siddons. Johnson had told her that "her great predecessor, Mrs. Pritchard, was in common life a vulgar idiot, who used to talk of her 'gownd;' but that on the

stage she seemed to be inspired by gentility and understanding." Inspiration indeed! unless we are to suppose that in private she condescended to slip-slop, and erred, not from ignorance, but carelessness and habit. I have known great knowledge, oddly enough, tinged by early laxity of pronunciation. The reader may reflect how often, from those who must be aware of the true word, he has heard a pantomime called *pantomine.*

END OF VOLUME I.

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